THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

JOHN RICHELSEN

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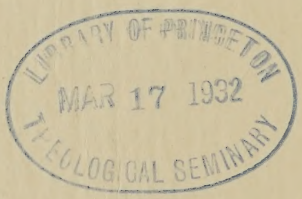

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The joy of discovery

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The Joy of Discovery

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

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With an Introduction by
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Introduction

SERMONS are coming to their own. More of them are being published each year, and more are being read. The public is discovering that much that is best and most vital in Christian conception of today is found in sermons. Here ablest men express themselves and often in their ablest way.

As editor of *The Expositor,* several years ago, the writer of this Introduction discovered the sermonizing powers of the author of this volume of vital messages. The people of his own strong and rapidly-growing church, of course, long before had made the discovery. But we were able gradually to overcome the preacher's reluctance to see his sermons in print and treated the readers of our magazine to not a few of the results of his pulpit work. They liked them. They asked for more. And now, at our suggestion, he has prepared this volume of fifteen pulpit messages.

Too often it is feared that the succession of great preachers will somehow get broken or lost—" shattered by changes of thought, by the widening of horizons, or by the hurried indifference of the world." " But," as has been said, " true preaching is helped, not hurt, by lengthening vistas of knowledge and the setting back of the skyline. Lifting skies of outlook only make the old issues more acute and the sharp questions more poignant. The preacher

must speak in the accent and idiom of his age, must know it, love it, and thrill with its passion and promise, if he is to minister to it. He must feel with the men and women to whom he speaks, must know the turns in the road and what the pilgrims carry in their packs. But he must also know that men do not go to church to hear about science, or philosophy, or even literature, much less to listen to essays on economics. They are sorely needing and sadly seeking something else. They long to hear a voice out of the heavens, some one who knows the things eye hath not seen nor ear heard. They seek, as of old, the healing touch, the forgiving word, the Hand stretched out in the darkness, which makes them know that they are not alone in their struggle for the good."

These are true words. Such has been the business of true preaching in every generation. As we have been intimating, the sermons in this volume are of this high grade and helpful nature. They are in refreshing variety. They are modern in both matter and treatment, yet they contain fundamental things needed today and in all the days. Even the titles entice—" The Dare of Christ," " The Joy of Discovery," " The Magnetic Christ," " The Defeat of the Strategist," " The Thrill of Easter," " Impossible Neutrality," etc.—these and all the others of the entire fifteen are such as will awaken strong desire to read. After having read in manuscript we gladly add—" and the reader will not be disappointed."

G. B. F. HALLOCK.

Brick Church,
Rochester, N. Y.

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I

THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—MATTHEW 13:45-46.

THERE are no absolute standards of value.

What is a glass of water worth? It may be worth a fraction of a cent. It may be worth a million dollars. To a man buried many days in a cave it may be worth the whole material world. A million dollars is not worth a cent to one who is drawing his last breath. Valuations are relative and unstable, depending on fluctuating circumstances.

In Matthew's Gospel we read one of Jesus' wonderful and gripping short stories. The parable, told in thirty-three words, is tucked away among longer stories and might be passed over without receiving the attention it merits. But it throbs with life when we give it time. It is a parable of the joy of discovery.

The restless spirit of search is a vital element of human progress. The eternal "why?" falls from

the lips of the prattling infant and remains the final puzzle question of old age. It is the eternal human quest for new knowledge and new sensations. And the joy of discovery never dies until the human spirit is dead. Jesus' story is of seeking, and of the rapture of finding. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

The joy of finding the kingdom of heaven overwhelms him who knows how to appraise the value of the discovery. No doubt our lives would be beneficially influenced if we frequently re-appraised the value of our salvation. It will do us great good to hear the pearl merchant, as he is disposing of his possessions utter his slogan, "Everything I have I sell!" Was he foolish in his estimate of values?

The value of the salvation offered in the gospel is so beyond comparison with that of any other possessions which man may ever acquire, that the possibility of obtaining that salvation, when one realizes what this means, must cause the comparative value of all other earthly possessions to shrink almost to the point of annihilation.

Jesus, in telling His story of the pearl merchant, unveils His own estimate of the value of salvation. Salvation, to those who are able to appraise it, is what the pearl of great price was to the pearl merchant.

Jesus knew about pearls. But what He had to

say about pearls in this story is from the viewpoint of a pearl merchant. Pearls are the business of the pearl merchant. As a connoisseur of pearls, he is acquainted with the history of their "finds." He is always seeking them. They fascinate him. He knows at a glance whether a pearl has come from Ceylon or from the Red Sea. Flaws in pearls are seen by him instantly. He is on the alert for new pearls. He watches the caravans coming from the East. He lives with pearls. He dreams about pearls.

Pearls are to the pearl merchant what paintings are to an artist. Jesus might have said to a group of art students: "the kingdom of heaven is like unto an artist seeking goodly paintings: who, when he found a masterpiece, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Jesus' conviction was that the salvation offered us in the gospel is so great a treasure that those who have the soul capacity to appraise it gladly give all they have to obtain it.

There was no sacrifice, in the sense of loss or privation, in the exchange for the one pearl of great price of all that the merchant man had. Does an oil operator suffer a loss if, when he discovers a piece of producing acreage far exceeding any other of which he has ever known, he sells all he has to buy it? Any adequate conception of the worth of salvation prohibits the idea that a man suffers loss in obtaining it, no matter what its cost to him. Jesus would have men gain, not lose: become rich,

not poor. It were inconceivable that anyone would need to beg the pearl merchant please to give up some of his other possessions and please to buy the pearl of great price.

Jesus never coaxed men to accept salvation. That were a false emphasis in preaching the gospel.

Salvation cost God the precious blood of Jesus Christ. There is no need to offer inducements, prizes and premiums with salvation to make it worth the attention of men and desirable. If men are not overwhelmed with joy in the discovery that they may, under any conditions, obtain salvation, it is because they are not capable of gauging values. No joy: no appraisal. And under such circumstances it is dishonoring to God to depreciate salvation, and cheapen it, by urging its acceptance as if thereby a favor were being bestowed on God. Jesus characterized the futility and shamefulness of such treatment of God's salvation in His words to His disciples: "Cast not your pearls before swine."

No man suffers a loss under any circumstances so long as he obtains salvation. A man who is able to gauge values, who can appraise the worth to him of salvation, sells anything, rather than permit that pearl to escape him. The comparative value of all other earthly possessions shrinks to nothing. "He sold," we read of this pearl merchant, "all that he had, and bought it."

See the pearl merchant leaving the presence of the man who showed him the one pearl above all pearls. Does the merchant appear to be gloomy, sad, depressed after he has been shown the pearl? No: he is ecstatic and he is running. And the only thing he is doing even more swiftly than his running is the mental calculation of how to turn his possessions into liquid assets. Do you not see him hastening toward his store in the city? But on his way he first calls on the auctioneer and drags him along with him in his haste. A little red flag, "Auction Sale," goes over the front door of his shop. "What will you sell?" the astonished auctioneer asks.

"Everything I have I sell!" the pearl merchant declares emphatically.

Soon the auctioneer cries out the wares of the pearl merchant, the crowds gather, the goods are transferred, the money flows in. After awhile the first rush of business is over. You hear the auctioneer giving counsel to the merchant: "No more can be sold today without foolish sacrifice: let us wait till tomorrow!"

Does the pearl merchant stop the sale? No! He reduces prices in order to turn more of his stock of goods into money. "Everything I have I sell!" he answers the auctioneer, and he shouts over the auctioneer's shoulders to the crowd of purchasers: "Everything I have I sell!"

Is not that the pearl merchant's wife, with con-

sternation written on her face, coming toward him? No doubt she has heard the news of the sale. "What is it you are doing?" she cries.

"Everything I have I sell!" he tells her.

"You are sacrificing your possessions?" she asks in amazement and fear. He knows an explanation is due his life partner. He takes her aside to explain: "No, no! I am not sacrificing anything. I have just seen that pearl of which we have been dreaming all our lives! We will have something more wonderful than you have ever seen. Oh, if I can only get it! Help me sell everything I have so that I may obtain it!"

You see the merchant at his banker's. "Everything I have I sell! Take my securities, my houses, my fixtures, my documents: I need what they will bring quickly! Everything I have I sell!" And at the end of the day the banker relates to a friend the story of his client, the pearl merchant, and of his frenzied sale and the purchase of the pearl of great price: "he sold all that he had, and bought it."

The value of God's salvation through Jesus Christ has not become depreciated during the past two thousand years. It is worth to you just what Jesus said the pearl of great price was worth to the pearl merchant. It is valuable to you beyond all comparison with anything you may otherwise possess. Jesus was not using loose rhetoric, but was declaring eternal truth regarding the value of

salvation when He said: " If any man come to me and hate not (*i. e.*, does not love less) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple " (Luke 14: 26).

Your Lord does not wish you to lose anything. He wishes you to possess something wonderful. But if you go away " very sorrowful," like the rich young ruler, you evidently do not know the value of the pearl of great price, or you appraise it differently than Jesus did. It is true, today, as always, that if you knew the value of salvation you gladly and eagerly would sell all you have, if necessary, to obtain it. The man who has any adequate conception of the value of salvation determines to possess it. He does not let minor matters peeve him. He would let his body be burned as a torch, rather than lose it. He appreciates the words of Jesus: " Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? "

Let us be frank. Do these words still leave you cold? Is there in your heart the impression of solemn duty rather than ecstatic joy? Surely your reaction to the proposition that salvation is of more value than anything else on earth, is a self-revelation of your own appraisal. The pearl mer-

chant was not filled with gloom when he saw the pearl of great price. What is wrong?

The cure for our joylessness does not lie in an effort of the will. Joy cannot be commanded. It is created indirectly, not directly. Take time to contemplate your salvation, the value of which is so wonderful as to cause the comparative value of all other earthly possessions to shrink almost to annihilation. Think not of your failure of appreciation, but think of Jesus' pearl merchant.

Had the pearl merchant not grown blasè? All his life he had been fascinated by the hope of a great find. How often had he been disappointed! Always there were rumors of a wonderful pearl which would be brought across the desert by the next caravan. Always it was the next caravan. Often he had been thrilled in anticipation, but the realization brought disillusionment and disappointment.

But there came the day. We see him, as was his custom, going out from the city to meet the incoming caravan from the East. The pearl merchant knows all the old traders. He bows to the linen man, and passes on. A word is exchanged with the spices merchant. Then he hails the jewelry man. "Just about the usual offering?" he calls in greeting.

The jewelry man, his old friend, seems nervous. But perhaps he is merely growing old. He asks the pearl merchant into his tent. He opens the box of

jewels. The nervousness had no particular meaning. There are beautiful stones to be seen, some of them quite remarkable pearls. But the pearl merchant has seen pearls for many years. There is nothing extraordinary. The trade will be a good one for him; but that is all.

Then the jewelry man lays his hand on the pearl merchant's shoulder. There is, in his eye, a question of whether he may trust the pearl merchant to see and appreciate. Evidently he is satisfied that he is dealing with one who knows. Reverently he draws forth from a hiding place in his inner garments a small receptacle. With tense expression and trembling hands he brings to view a pearl.

The merchant man seeking goodly pearls fastens his eyes upon the one pearl of great price which he sees. There is no haggling. In a moment, on that happy day, the pearl merchant, who knows pearls, fixes his choice, the great transaction's done! As he hastens away to make final arrangements for its purchase he sings in his heart: " Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it! "

II

THE DARE OF CHRIST

"He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand."
—MARK 3 : 5.

HRISTIANITY is an adventure. Christianity attracts bold spirits. It fascinates men who in the spiritual realm are pioneers: who have daring and initiative.

Small-spirited men have a hard time of it to appreciate the attractiveness of Christianity. But Christianity has always had drawing power for large-spirited, bold, tumultuous men. It has fascinated men who, had they not become great saints, would have been daring sinners: and sometimes they were both.

Men who could be interested in thirty pieces of silver would only be temporary disciples. Christianity has not been kept alive by small-spirited Christians: such have been Christianity's parasites, using up her storage of vitality, and contributing nothing. The big-spirited men, men who would have become generals and king-makers and empire-builders if they had not gone wild over Jesus Christ, have constituted the constructive forces of Christianity. Being set in prominent, historic

places is a matter of circumstances. What is true of men set in a world arena holds equally true of men whose lives are set in lesser theatres. Jesus courts and intrigues violent men.

A man came into the synagogue of Capernaum who had a withered hand. Luke tells us it was his right hand which was deprived of use. St. Jerome said that the man was a bricklayer. This man was asked by Jesus to stand up in the synagogue so all could see him. The audience was hostile. The man was placed in an embarrassing position. He was commanded to put his trust in Christ, and to do so publicly and conspicuously and while he could not as yet be certain that his acquiescence would result in his healing. It was a challenge of venture. It was the dare Christ offered.

No doubt there was hesitation, wavering, misgiving in the mind of this paralytic during the moments which flashed by after Jesus said: "Stretch forth thine hand." There was nothing impossible in the command. It was not the man's arm that was paralyzed. He could stretch forth his withered hand. But in doing that he would be declaring that he trusted Jesus to heal him. Perhaps Jesus reached out His own hand toward him with the invitation, "Give me your hand!" Surely it was that in substance.

If we see this man in the synagogue and live through the scene with him and feel with him at the

end when faith and daring overcame fear and distrust, we shall be sympathetic when he finally moves his arm forward and cries out: " Jesus, here is my hand! "

We may wonder why Jesus required this commitment of the paralytic man. Was it a whim? Was it a requirement which fitted only this particular case? The story will mean even more to us than sympathetic joy in another man's victory, and we shall be more personally and vitally interested in its issue if we realize that Jesus' reasons for requiring the adventure of faith are as much applicable to us as they were to this paralytic. Since this paralytic would not have been healed, had he not dared, we will also learn the truth that without daring we shall not be saved.

Christianity demands of men a commitment, a yielding of themselves beyond known borders, an adventure. This is not an arbitrary condition of salvation, but is a soul exercise essential to salvation. Without this adventure there is no possibility of conversion.

Christianity lays great stress on the necessity of a commitment of faith before witnesses. This is one of the peculiarities of the Christian religion.

A commitment before witnesses predicates the necessity of an audience. Christianity cannot function without audiences. It cannot be developed in solitude; or over the radio. There is nothing merely incidental in this requirement of

witnesses. Certain things in Christianity must be done before men. It is clear that Jesus expected public profession of allegiance to Him as a condition of salvation. Throughout the Bible there is insistence on public commitments. So we have this demand on the paralytic, "Stretch forth thine hand."

It is contrary to the genius of Christianity that it be cultivated in isolation. The Lord's prayer carries the implication of an audience as witness, for it begins not with "my" Father, but with "our" Father. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper cannot be administered in solitude. The commitment of public affirmation is not a caprice on the part of God, but has its reasons deep in the souls of men. It is not an arbitrary demand. It means something vital.

In a reasonable religion we expect to find, and at least partially to understand divine reasons to support its demands. So we look for the reasons for public commitment. We do not know what determines the human will or what are the sources of its decisions. We are convinced that intellectual processes have little to do with our wills. The human will is not mechanical as are scales. The preponderance of reasons does not always determine conduct. It is our common experience that in most of our actions we throw to the winds any overbalance of reasons one way or the other to pursue the course which is dictated by our will,

or desire, or vague sense of right, or undefined feeling of what is best to do. We often throw doubt on the finality of our own intellectual processes and, contrary to them, act according to our intuitions.

Though the sources of our conduct may often puzzle us, we do know, from the facts of our experience, that nothing so determines the will as affirmation or commitments. Men seldom believe anything until after they have repeatedly affirmed it. Each successive affirmation men make fastens conviction on their souls as nails fasten boards.

Let a man constantly assert that he accepts Jesus Christ as his Saviour and he is not troubled with doubt. Let a man frequently affirm that he does not know what he believes, and he is soon utterly bewildered. This fact in the souls of men is so seriously true that when a man begins the affirmation of what he knows is not true, he ends with inability to distinguish the truth as he first knew it, and to believe his own lie.

Jesus had reasons for demanding a commitment by speech and conduct: "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny (refuse to confess) me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." That is unequivocal.

This commitment which Christ demands is an adventure.

There is no adventure in traveling over ground you have before covered. The Christian commitment is a plunging into the unknown. Adventure begins when you cross a bridge over which you have not before gone. The thrill of adventure lays hold on us when we wander into the woods beyond the clearing.

Christianity's appeal is to the daring in the souls of men. Therefore timid souls are afraid of Christ. They shy away from Him. He makes them uncomfortable. One who would not commit himself beyond his present experiences fears to hear the insistent invitations of Jesus. Jesus wished this man in the Capernaum synagogue to take the plunge of faith. It meant taking a chance on Jesus. Of course the paralytic would have become ridiculous had Jesus not been able to do anything for him or had the paralytic found himself in the crisis unable to stretch forth his hand. The dare compels one to discount the possibility of failure. Otherwise it were no daring. This man was in the circumstances of a child whose parent sets him on a table and demands, " Jump, and I'll catch you! "

Assurance comes only after venture. Assurance before venture is the desire of the faint-hearted. But the divine order of things is to the contrary. In the midst of dreadful uncertainty Jesus urged on the paralytic the adventure of faith as a condition of healing.

This man with the palsied hand could not have

any assurance until after he ventured. Of course he had the testimony of others concerning the power of Jesus. Such testimony made his course reasonable. Yet it could not guarantee him certainty in his own case. Testimony of others does not create certainty. One does not become a swimmer by memorizing a text-book of directions, amply attested as correct. It is well enough to know the theories of buoyancy. Yet most people who swim know little about the theories. And all the book knowledge concerning swimming does no good without actually getting into the water. Then only does one know he can swim. God is out in the deep calling to bold spirits to plunge themselves into the crimson flood.

Such commitment before assurance may frighten small-spirited men. They have a hard time of it to grasp what induced some men to give up everything for Jesus Christ. But great men, bold spirits, like John the Baptist and Saul of Tarsus, Christ always challenged with His dare: men who could talk back to kings and endure imprisonment and beheading. Jesus captivated and fascinated men like Matthew and Zacchæus who had it in them to do daring things, who were not afraid to leave everything they had to follow Him. To some men, Christianity does not mean anything beyond an expedient to save themselves from going to hell. Christ fills their small capacities, but they cannot know what larger capacities Jesus could equally fill.

Jesus courted violent men. He intrigued them with His idea of the kingdom of heaven. After referring to men who were like reeds shaken with the wind; or were men clothed in soft raiment; He said: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth (*i. e.*, "permits," as in "suffer little children to come unto me,") violence and the violent take it by force." Christianity has enthralled and led captive the bold men, the men of daring and initiative, and, due to their magnificent service poured out unsparingly, Christianity has persisted in every generation even against otherwise overwhelming lethargy.

You will need to stretch forth your hand if ever you are to know the power of Christ. Some of you may have begun to make your commitment and then have again drawn back your hand. Jesus asks commitment, a yielding of yourself beyond known borders, an adventure. This is not merely an arbitrary demand. It is essential to your soul's salvation. A deliberate, sincere, final commitment of one's self to God through Jesus Christ, is conversion. After such commitment comes assurance.

At the brink of salvation loiter the hesitant, the fearful, the trifling. They are always thinking about swimming and studying the waters, but do not plunge in. They are afraid of Christ's dare. Jesus, after He went back to heaven, sent a final message to them in the words: "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art luke-

warm and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth." Thus always ends the story of Jesus Christ and the small-spirited.

This paralytic might have hesitated and never been healed. Did he not question within himself: " How do I know that this Jesus can heal me? He seems to have healed others, yet that does not prove He can help me. Why is it necessary for me to stretch forth my hand to Him here in public? "

The situation was embarrassing to this man. His friends and neighbors were about him. And this audience was hostile to Jesus. Jesus had " looked round about on them with anger." And still the paralytic, even under these trying circumstances, was commanded publicly to put his trust in Christ. Dare he do it? There was hesitation and doubt and misgivings. The answer would be framing itself on his lipe: " No, that I cannot do! "

But when Christ and certain kinds of men meet, the magnetism of Jesus is irresistible. This man in the Capernaum synagogue had the soul Christ could reach. He ventured. There was inner persuasion that gave him will-power to initiate action. He accepted Christ's dare.

See him rising to meet Jesus who had commanded, " Stretch forth thine hand." Watch his arm bend forward as he commits himself: " Jesus, here is my hand! "

III

IMPOSSIBLE NEUTRALITY

"Joseph of Arimathæa, an honorable counsellor, . . . came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."—MARK 15:43.

NEUTRALITY is indifference to the success or failure of a conflict. It may be friendliness toward both sides of a controversy. It means taking no part. The state of neutrality proclaims a person, or a body of persons, as not committed to either side of a question.

Partizanship is the opposite of neutrality. Friendship giving itself expression whether for a person, principle or ideal, makes itself partizan.

Joseph of Arimathæa was one of the seventy members of the Sanhedrin, the highest religious body of the nation. Like Nicodemus, he was a ruler of the Jews. When Jesus was brought to trial before the Sanhedrin Joseph of Arimathæa was one of His judges. At that time nothing is told us of this Joseph. There is little doubt that he was kindly disposed toward our Lord. Yet he kept that fact a secret. As a just man, Joseph could not agree to pronounce Jesus guilty. In a

subsequent statement we are told of this Joseph (Luke 23: 50), "the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them."

The first impression made on us by Joseph of Arimathæa is that of conservatism, neutrality and justice. His sense of justice forbade his voting for Jesus' crucifixion on the night before the execution: his conservatism kept him from taking any decided stand in Jesus' behalf: his neutrality commanded his silence.

It is evident that something happened within Joseph's heart during the hours in which Jesus hung on the Cross which changed his attitude from benevolent neutrality to bold partizanship. On the evening of Good Friday Pilate was sought by an unexpected visitor with an astonishing request: "Joseph of Arimathæa, an honorable counsellor, . . . came, and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus."

The request was a frank avowal by this Ruler of Israel of his partizanship for Jesus. There is contained in it a thrill of loyalty to a new friendship. The petition revealed deep feeling. It stands out against the background of Joseph's position and character. It was not simply an act of justice. As such it would have come too late to have meaning. The high color of the picture presented us is the red of the blood of partizanship and bold committal.

If we may become acquainted with this Joseph

of Arimathæa and may know his process of thought, bringing him to this momentous decision, there will be something gripping us in the throat as we finally hear him say to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate: "Your excellency, I ask for the body of Jesus of Nazareth which is hanging on the Cross on Calvary!"

Moved by the heroic devotion of Joseph of Arimathæa, it will hardly be possible for us to miss certain conclusions about our own partizanship toward Jesus Christ, or our lack of it. The reasons may be revealed which are the causes of our own attitude and conduct, whatever it be.

Intense friendship and neutrality are mutually exclusive sentiments. Man cannot both love and be neutral toward the same object. Justice and neutrality are compatible. Love and partizanship are compatible. But love and neutrality are incompatible. Where there is affection neutrality is impossible.

Previous to the incident related in the text, the attitude of Joseph of Arimathæa toward Jesus must be characterized as one which was neutral and judicial.

An attitude of neutrality is often justified. It may be justified on the grounds of indifference toward an issue. Not every conflict is worthy of our attention. An attitude of neutrality may be sensible on the ground of incompetence of knowledge. Particularly is this true when a question of

the relation between Christianity and science is raised and one knows himself not to be competent as a scientist. Under such circumstances it is folly to be partizan. An attitude of neutrality may be justified on the grounds of prudence. Peaceable living with our fellowmen is often conditioned on the wisdom of refusing to be a partizan in conflicts which are none of our business. Also, in the administration of justice the only honorable attitude is that of neutrality.

Little fault may be found with the conservative neutrality of Joseph of Arimathæa so long as Jesus Christ meant to him only a good man who was unjustly accused. Joseph had probably done his full duty in the Sanhedrin. He had defended Jesus. Yet it should be realized that Joseph had defended Jesus only as he would and should have defended any other man who was not receiving justice.

Of course there is a vast difference between such an attitude of neutral justice and the attitude of personal devotion. It is not too much to say that before this day Joseph of Arimathæa would have hesitated long, before he would have consented to walk the streets of Jerusalem in broad daylight, arm in arm with Jesus.

Neutrality and friendship are incompatible. You will remember Jesus' praise of friendship: "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend." That which would cause one to lay down his life for another,

such friendship, is not compatible with neutrality. One may not lose all sense of justice, when friendship is involved, but the sense of unbiased neutrality and indifference is gone forever even when one finds it necessary to execute justice. One does not ask justice of a friend. One demands justice from anyone, as a right. You do a man no favor in granting him justice. It is his right. It is your duty.

In being just to him, Joseph was no partizan of Jesus. From a friend one expects partizanship. And the deeper the friendship the keener the partizanship. Is there a partizanship equal to that of a mother? Love knows only partizanship: no partizanship, no love.

So long as Jesus was no particular friend of Joseph of Arimathæa an attitude of neutrality and justice was altogether honorable. But a combination of love and neutrality is impossible. Could you be neutral toward your mother? Your child? When Joseph came to love Jesus he could no longer avoid the open declaration of his partizanship.

It were difficult to overstate the effect of Joseph's conduct over many thousands of men and women in Jerusalem. It must have swayed a multitude in favor of Jesus. The face of Pilate surely expressed frank astonishment. The Roman soldiers who participated in the execution could hardly have felt at ease in their former conclusions concerning Jesus. The reputation which Joseph of Arimathæa, " the

honorable counsellor," had gained through many years of worthy living, the standing he commanded with his fellowmen, all was now thrown as influence to the cause of the Lord.

Before the partizanship of Joseph was declared, there may have been unanimity of condemnation against Christ in the market places of Jerusalem. It is not difficult to imagine oneself overhearing the gossip in the bazaars of the city: " This Jesus who was crucified yesterday was surely a miserable deceiver and blasphemer." And another concurs: " All those simple-minded followers of His were nothing but silly fools." And a third: " They must have felt proud of their Lord when they saw Him hanging with the thieves and murderers—that was where He belonged."

But how disconcerting to their complacency of condemnation must it have been when one came and asked: " Have you heard that Joseph of Arimathæa has turned and become a disciple of the crucified Jesus? " One can imagine nothing but the laughter of unbelief, " What? The venerable Joseph, the Ruler of the Sanhedrin? You are out of your mind! Joseph of Arimathæa is one of the finest men of our nation."

But then came corroboration of the strange news. The account of the request before Pilate became verified. The details of Joseph's purchases of spices and fine linen to anoint the body of Jesus were established beyond doubt, as well as that

more intimate and personal tribute of devotion, the laying of Jesus' body in the tomb reserved for Joseph himself. So the astonishing fact stood beyond gainsaying: Joseph had become Jesus' partizan. His endorsement of Jesus was unequivocal. It was sensational. What a glorious contribution Joseph of Arimathæa made to the reputation of Jesus among his contemporaries. Forever he engraved his own name on the books of earth and heaven.

For us in our own sphere of influence there is but this one partizan attitude:

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the honor of His word,
The glory of His Cross."

If you are a real partizan of Jesus Christ your one chief concern is how, when and where, you may best honor His name and extend His influence over the world. So long as Jesus is no particular friend of yours you may honorably give Him the justice He deserves and stop there. But as a partizan of His your chief concern will be to declare and emphasize your allegiance and loyalty and devotion. Only in a secondary way will you consider your own preferences, prejudices, ease and comfort.

The practical execution of one's impulse to acts of loyalty will not be performed without suggestions for delay or modification or repressions.

Such suggestions must also have come to Joseph of Arimathæa before his final heroic action.

I think Joseph looked upon Jesus on the Cross and heard what He said and saw how He died: and so recalled many other things concerning Jesus, and finally gave his unreserved affection to Him. And as the sun began to sink in the west and the shadows of the crosses lengthened and the body on the middle cross had grown entirely still, Joseph began to think of what would now soon follow—the usual treatment of an executed criminal's remains—the lacerated body thrown naked into a grave in the potter's field before sundown.

Probably then the thought was born in him: " It is too bad that Jesus' disciples have not sufficient influence to save the body of Jesus from this desecration!—Pilate could issue an order to prevent this needless humiliation.—But none of these Galilæans are of sufficient importance to have any weight with Pilate."

Yet the matter could not thus be dismissed from his mind, while the question arose, " But if I, myself, should go, would not Pilate listen? "

The usual attitude of the Jewish rabbis toward the representative of Rome is well known. It were humiliating to a ruler of the Jews to feel compelled to ask a favor of the politician whom Cæsar had sent to Jerusalem. No doubt Joseph of Arimathæa recoiled from the suggestion. " It would be no service to Jesus now, anyway; for He is dead.—It

is too late to do anything, now.—No other grave can now be prepared before sundown! " But a conclusion was insistent: " If you really loved Jesus you would not have your own splendid mausoleum stand empty here, nearby, while the body of your friend was thrown into the potter's field! "

The crisis for Joseph's soul was at hand. " If I go to Pilate and obtain the body of Jesus and place it in my own tomb I will be hated by all my fellowmen, be laughed at in derision and place a lifelong stigma on my name. That I will not do. That I cannot do! " Regretfully he would leave Golgotha.

Once more he looks upon Jesus on the Cross. He sees and believes that which millions since that day have experienced at the foot of the Cross. When that truth flashes dazzlingly on his mind it is as if he had cried out:

" Jesus, and shall it ever be
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee whom angels praise
Whose glory shines through endless days? "

Then he wraps his cloak about him and steps quickly and firmly down Calvary's hill and across Kedron. Men salute him as he passes them on his way: " Peace with thee, Rabbi! " " Peace, Rabbi Joseph! "—But Joseph replies without seeing or stopping.

You may follow him as he goes through the gates

into the city. He comes to the palace of the Roman Governor. The soldier on guard is astonished at the request of the rabbi for an immediate interview with Pontius Pilate. But the soldier only salutes and goes. In a moment there sounds the measured tread of the palace guards, and the Captain transmits the message: " His excellency will hear you. He grants you audience! "

Now you see Rabbi Joseph of Arimathæa as he crosses the marble floor of the Judgment Hall and stands before Pontius Pilate: you hear his words: " Your excellency, I ask for the body of Jesus of Nazareth which is hanging on the Cross on Calvary! "

IV

THE MAGNETIC CHRIST

"*And he* [*Matthew*] *left all, rose up, and followed him.*"—LUKE 5:28.

THE magnet is a force of attraction, and *is* a force of selective attraction.

A box may contain sawdust, shavings, bits of steel. If one draw a magnet across such a box the steel struggles and works its way upward and finally leaps to the magnet. The sawdust is unaffected.

A magnet is a test of materials. The magnet reveals the sawdust and the steel. It is inevitable. The judgment is inexorable. There is no possibility of mistake.

Matthew's response to Jesus' summons was sensational. He is introduced as a Roman tax-gatherer sitting at the collection of toll; a Pariah and an outcast from Israel. Jesus, in passing Matthew's place of business, invites him into fellowship with the simple command, "Follow me."

All Christendom is interested in the story of the conversion of this great disciple who later made so valuable a contribution to New Testament literature. But such interest is intensified and of per-

sonal concern if the wonderful response of Matthew is to be explained by a spiritual principle of universal application. If we ought to respond as Matthew did, and yet do not respond as he did to the call of Jesus, we should know if Christianity asserts it can explain every response or every absence of response by a rule which is without exceptions.

We have related to us the response of Matthew which thrills our souls: "he left all, rose up, and followed him." When we understand why Matthew followed Jesus the relation of his action to ourselves will be clear and we will have more than passing interest in seeing him sweep everything else aside and pledge himself for that day and for all the days of his life in the decision: "Jesus, gladly will I follow thee!"

The responses of men to the approach of Jesus are inevitably determined by the state of spiritual receptivity in the human soul, which always reveals itself automatically and unmistakably in Jesus' presence.

The gospel reveals men. It reveals men to themselves. It reveals men to themselves so unmistakably that they may clearly judge themselves.

Some men were instantly attracted to Jesus. Other men were never convinced by Jesus' personality or message. The instant effectiveness of Jesus' contacts with some men is one of the outstanding facts of the Gospels. The case of

Matthew may be accepted as a typical illustration to this point. But Matthew's reaction was not a unique occurrence. Many of Matthew's contemporaries responded as he did, and with equal fervor.

These striking results of Jesus' ministry are not adequately accounted for by any of the words or arguments used by Jesus. In Matthew's case the words preceding the surrender were, " Follow me." Yet no words of Jesus were automatically effective. Had Jesus' power been in words we might expect His logic inevitably to compel conviction. But His words were not thus convincing. There was no formula which was necessarily faith-producing. Jesus did not summarize the gospel into a verbal prescription. No universal syllogism was enunciated which would inevitably convince like a mathematical proposition.

No great astuteness is needed to surmise a play of forces beneath the actual words of Jesus. As we note results like this one in the story of Matthew, we instinctively feel that Jesus was grappling, with arms of love, beneath the surface of the things communicated by words. It was as if Jesus addressed some faculty deeper and more reliable than the brain. We have reason to believe that there is an inner consciousness in man of which the intellect is only a door. Jesus reached down into those hidden recesses of man's being. He spoke deep to deep, soul to soul. Sometimes there were no re-

sults. Sometimes the effects seemed magical, startling, as in the conversion of Matthew.

Do you recall the story of Nathanael? When he and Jesus met, things also happened quickly. There was a short question: "Whence knowest thou me?" There were a few words which mean nothing to us: "When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee." Yet we feel that something was taking place beneath the surface; deep speaking unto deep. We become aware that souls have made contact. One, who a moment before was an avowed skeptic, now cries out: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel."

Jesus was always approaching men, calling them. They either believed on Him, or disbelieved. There was a parting of ways. There was created an unavoidable crisis for the soul. The gospels are the history of these crises. Bluntly the facts are stated. There was no attempt to hide displeasing truths. The Gospels are not loving imagination. The frankness of the gospel writers is sometimes disconcerting. If one desired to believe that Jesus' ministry was always successful, some statements of the biographers of the New Testament would be keenly disappointing. Love for the Master may resent the recitals of the failures of Jesus' work—at least until love understands.

With frank disingenuity we are told that many approaches of Christ to men utterly fell flat. He was not always convincing. There were those on

whom He lavished all the winsomeness of His personality in vain; into whose ears He poured His messages without arousing any response. Men left His glowing presence unaffected and cold. In spite of all His eloquence and toil, they did not believe on Him.

Then, again, thousands of Matthew's fellowmen responded in like manner as he did. You hear their cry: "Jesus, gladly will we follow thee." Men and women of most unlikely types, rose to heroic stature and continued true to Jesus till their death. Through the ages the chorus has been swelled by millions of old and young, wise and ignorant, princes and paupers, who also have "joined the everlasting song and crowned Him Lord of all."

Human souls seemed at times like lost coins. Jesus' words ate into the rust and grime, the accumulations of cares and worries, the hard crusts of neglect and sin. Some coins, seemingly in bad condition, being cleansed, revealed the face and superscription of the Heavenly Father. Other coins seemed to have been utterly destroyed by the rust which had penetrated to their very centers, beyond reclaim.

Jesus spent all night with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. It was a noteworthy conference because, during it, Jesus poured out His philosophy of salvation, and the second birth, in words which have become the classic expressions of the terms of redemption. But the interview was not conspicuous

for its results. Nicodemus does not seem to have been touched to response.

There is the dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. The nature of the kingdom of truth was discussed. Jesus declared His belief in such a kingdom and affirmed that He Himself was its sovereign. It was a marvellously appealing discourse poured forth by the Lord of Glory into the ear of the Roman Governor. Yet after He had finished, Pilate ordered Him flogged. That soil of Pilate's heart was simply impossible. Contrast Nicodemus or Pilate with Nathanael or Matthew, and there is sufficient illustration of the varied states of spiritual receptivity that determined the result of Jesus' approaches.

The soil dictated the result of the sowing of the gospel seed. The sower was always faithful and the seed was consistently good; but the nature of the ground into which it fell decreed the response. The facts of the story of Jesus remove any doubts that the state of spiritual receptivity determined the crisis of the soul.

It was not Jesus who was gauged by the varied results of His approach, but the calibre of the individual's soul. Upon Jesus' call there was made a self-registry of soul capacity. Jesus' invitation attracted and unmistakably drew the souls which were sensitive to the things of God. It was invariably a test of the soul. There was no escape from it. There never was a mistake in its accuracy. It

was infallible. Men's responses revealed their own soul condition. Thus the gospel approach removed the task of judgment from Jesus' shoulders so He could say, as He did, " I judge no man." This was so because the Gospel compelled men to automatic self-judgment.

Jesus is the soul's magnet. As a magnet is a test of materials, so Jesus is the test of souls. The magnet reveals the sawdust and the steel. It is inevitable. The judgment is inexorable. There is no possibility of mistake. The test of the soul is a self-revelation. It explains definitely why men believe or why men disbelieve.

Jesus said: " My sheep hear my voice."

This was Jesus' explanation of belief and unbelief.

" Ye believe not," Jesus said again, " because ye are not of my sheep." Jesus insisted that this test was invariably true: " If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

" Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice," Jesus said to Pilate; with those words cutting through all debate and the sophistries which the Governor would raise on the question of being able to discern truth. That is Jesus' assertion of a universal principle, applicable to " everyone."

We may pronounce judgment on ourselves by the result of the test of our souls. As Jesus called to Matthew, so He calls to us. Does the call leave us

cold, or does it set our souls throbbing? In the answer is the declaration of the state of the soul.

The state of the soul need not be static. Decisions were necessarily, and automatically, created by the approach of Jesus. Yet such decisions, when adverse, were not beyond recall and final. They concluded the matter for that time and perilously strengthened a tendency. Yet this is not a philosophy of fatalism. There is room for repentance up to the time when sin has eaten out the image of God in the soul. The soul is the soil and determines the fruition of the gospel seed. But the soil which is hard, trampled, resistant at one time, may be plowed and harrowed, by grace and by sorrow, and made receptive at another time. No man knows the limits of grace. Yet whether this should lead one to easy comfort or not, you yourself be the judge. How many conspicuous instances can you recall of men, in the gospels, who were unresponsive to Christ at His approach to them, and later became responsive? One's reaction to Jesus' voice calling today is not a trifling matter.

Dreading and longing were surely both in Matthew's heart when Jesus stood before him. A man may both yearn for and dread the same event. Matthew had already known much about this Jesus of Galilee. What he knew of Him must have touched chords of desire within his heart. Jesus had manifestly acted with the power of God in many instances already known to Matthew of Ca-

pernaum. Certain inevitable conclusions concerning this Jesus could hardly be dismissed. Israel's hopes and the promises of the fathers must constantly have flashed into Matthew's mind and soul. His inmost being would be strangely attracted to Jesus as by a soul magnet. What would he do if Jesus should ever happen to call him?

No doubt the dread realities of his situation forced Matthew to fight off his dreams. The thing was impossible. He would have to decline any invitation Jesus might proffer. He would need to explain to Jesus, if Jesus did not already know it, that he was a publican and a Roman tax-gatherer, and therefore ineligible to discipleship. He knew himself to be beyond the pale. He was a pariah and an outcast from Israel. No: he could not accept any invitation. He repressed the strange longings within himself. Under no circumstances would he become Jesus' avowed follower.

Then, one day, as Matthew was engrossed in his tasks at the receipt of custom, there was a commotion in the street. The cry was raised, " Jesus of Nazareth is coming this way! " In spite of resolutions, Matthew's heart leaped within him. He must see Jesus. The attraction was irresistible. He must hear that magnetic voice should Jesus have aught to say in the streets of Capernaum that day.

Preceded and followed by enthusiasts, Jesus came. He seemed immediately to note Matthew's

presence. He stopped to greet him. What were the words He addressed to Matthew? O, it was not in the words! Jesus was calling soul to soul, deep to deep! "Follow me!"

Matthew was of the truth. His soul knew the shepherd. Everything else was swept aside as he pledged himself for that day and for all the days of his life: "Jesus, gladly will I follow thee!" Casting the keys of his office to his successor, "he left all, rose up, and followed him."

V

THE DEFEAT OF THE STRATEGIST

"And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."—GENESIS 32:24.

GOD'S plan of salvation demands of men sincerity rather than strategy. The approval of God is gained not by cunning, but by submission. An exile's return to God is effected not by tactical arrangements for overcoming the consequence of sin, but by repentance and a contrite heart.

The patriarch Jacob, for many years an exile from the land of his fathers, had just finished his journey from Mesopotamia to the little river Jabbok which marked the boundary of his home country of Canaan. He was ready to cross over this water, when he was dramatically stopped. In the darkness of night an unknown antagonist engaged him in a bitter struggle. At dawn Jacob was crippled for life, but he was permitted to enter Canaan. And it was after the crossing of the Jabbok that Jacob became known as Israel.

This pivotal event in the life of the great patriarch has always held great interest for Jews and Christians. Yet the story has more than historic

significance for us when we realize that we have to do with a truth which must take hold of us as much as it seized Jacob. It concerns the method of God in dealing with unrepentant man. That dramatic occurrence at Jabbok illustrates a truth which grips conscience and cripples pride, until peace with God is attained.

The defeat of a strategist is presented to us. Jacob did not know, during that night, who his antagonist was. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." No doubt he prayed mightily to God for help while engaged in that desperate struggle which threatened all his fortunes. Was he praying to God to help him overcome God? Such a situation seems incongruous, at the first superficial glance, yet we shall not find it difficult to comprehend. In the morning following that night, Jacob declared: "I have seen God face to face." He was a new man. He bore a new name. The same experience makes new men today.

A man may desire to return to God, and may cleverly arrange to nullify human and material hindrances to his reinstatement, only to meet the one combatant by whom he himself must be overcome before his return may be consummated.

At middle-age, Jacob's accomplishments might have illustrated the qualities that win success. He had entered a foreign country as a bare-handed refugee, yet within twenty years after his compulsory emigration his wit and industry had made him

a man of outstanding importance. In his homeland of Canaan he had left behind him a deservedly bad reputation. This fact, however, did not seem to cast any shadow over his fortunes. In Mesopotamia he had gained riches and power. Laban, his uncle, tried to cheat and trick him, but was no match for Jacob. By indomitable will power Jacob overcame all handicaps. Families and possessions came to him: Jacob "increased exceedingly and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels."

Yet Jacob was homesick. It came to him in the midst of his prosperity. The long exile had not blotted out remembrance of the country of his ancestors. Perhaps the urge which had prompted his grandfather Abraham to forsake Ur of the Chaldees for Palestine made itself felt in Jacob's blood. Fertile Mesopotamia, yielding plentifully to him, was not home. Jacob could not crush out of his heart a longing for his childhood land. So Jacob was susceptible to the voice of the Lord which said: "return unto the land of thy fathers." Restlessness was caused by Jehovah, who had created Jacob for Himself.

Inquietude of soul is the experience of estranged men to whom God is calling. Jacob was not hardened. His yearning to return to the land of his fathers and rehabilitate himself in the country from which his sins had cast him out, was also a yearning to re-establish himself with God. Whether this

was clear to Jacob at the first we do not know. Probably the deeper meaning of his inquietude was somewhat vague to him. Certainly he had no knowledge of the crippling contest in which he would need to engage before the consummation of his plans would be possible. The crossing of the Jabbok was to result not merely in an outward change, but in a vital inward change which a new name should forever commemorate. Because this was the real significance of his proposed return, the angels visited him to encourage his response.

Cleverly Jacob arranged to nullify human and material hindrances to his repatriation. He resolved to fight the foes to his return. This was his answer to God's call. He faced his obstacles intelligently. There was in him no mental weakness or vacillations; in everything he exercised generalship and strategy.

Domestic entanglements were not permitted to thwart Jacob's purpose. In a family conference he recited his plans in detail and gained the approval of his wives for the hegira, though it involved many discomforts and dangers. A wise man is seen, cleverly handling a delicate situation without loss.

Jacob's possessions presented a problem. They could be moved but slowly. Laban would not let him go unhindered with what Jacob had acquired from him. Yet Jacob made his preparations for flight " unawares to Laban." It required the skillful planning of a strategist. He succeeded in plac-

ing a " seven days' journey " between himself and Laban, and when his enraged father-in-law finally overtook him, Jacob's tactical position was so greatly improved that he was able to force a satisfactory dissolution of his partnership with Laban.

These problems were trivial, however, in comparison with Jacob's one great obstacle to the return to Canaan. That obstacle was his brother Esau. Esau filled his horizon. Esau he had defrauded twenty years before; Esau he feared; Esau he must propitiate. Esau was the only worthy combatant to be considered. Could he overcome Esau? On that question he knew his final success must hinge. That was the lion in the path demanding all his ingenuity. Conquer Esau, and he conquered all.

In handling the Esau situation, Jacob displayed the acme of his ability as a tactician. He sought the weak place in Esau's armor. Esau would be a terrific fighter; but Esau was gullible. He must not threaten Esau. He must appease him. Indirectly, and without offence, he must impress Esau with the fact that his brother Jacob had become a man of importance. This would enhance the appearance of his subjection and deference to Esau. It would magnify Esau's importance in his own eyes. So messengers were instructed to find Esau and announce Jacob's approach with the words " thy servant Jacob." They were instructed to quote Jacob as using the words " my lord " when refer-

ring to Esau. That would feed Esau's vanity. It would indicate to Esau that though Jacob, by deceit, had won the blessing of the birthright, he had come to his senses during the intervening years and was ready to acknowledge the claims of Esau.

An astounding gift of goats and camels and asses was planned by Jacob to break the first resistance of Esau's ill-will. That meant tribute. It signified restitution. It intimated subjection. It was a plea for clemency. It was also flattery. The gift was spread out so as to be displayed to advantage. It was forwarded " drove by drove." Again he carefully instructed the bearers of the gifts. Nothing was left to chance. The first impression to be made on Esau was of prime importance. In detail he rehearsed the method of procedure for the first drove, the second, the third and all that followed. Specifically he emphasized the phraseology to be used. Always they were to say " my lord Esau " and " thy servant Jacob."

Jacob was confident he could handle Esau in conference after the gifts, the flattery and the tribute. He knew his brother. Esau was a man of sentiment, of passion, of feeling. He was governed by emotions. Jacob would play on those emotions as on a harp while he kept his own mind cool and calculating, alert to take advantage of Esau's impulses. So he had conquered him before, so he would conquer him again. Everything was set and ready.

Here, then, was an exile who had been susceptible to the voice of God bidding him to return, and who had cleverly arranged to overcome the human and material obstacles to his reinstatement. Should not so clever, so energetic, so earnest a man succeed? Especially so since what he desired to achieve was undoubtedly what God wished him to accomplish?

At the last moment, Jacob was stopped. Who would do that? Here at Jabbok, at the place of crossing over, he was effectually halted. It was not Esau whom he met and who blocked the way. It was an unknown combatant. It was one whom he had not taken into consideration. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." In the morning, after a crippling all-night struggle to fight his way over, he learned who his antagonist was and he named the place Peniel, for he confessed, "I have seen God face to face." It was God who hindered Jacob from crossing the Jabbok as a strategist, a conquerer, a supplanter. Jacob had planned to meet Esau. He met God.

Every crime against man is sin against God. That had not been clear to Jacob. It is the universal truth affecting us all. David learned it later, at a place which was his Jabbok, when he sought to return to God after the incidents of Bathsheba and Uriah, and finally broke down in contrition toward God with the cry, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." The prod-

igal son, when he comes to himself and returns home, puts first things first in his confession, "I have sinned against heaven."

Jacob learned that he needed first to get right with God. In his strategy he had overlooked that. It was a bitter mistake for him to suppose that he could rid himself of the consequences of his sins by cunningly appeasing or overcoming man, without first taking account of God.

For us, too, if God has been making us homesick, the return to God is on the highway of repentance. "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." "I tell you, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Strategy, or cunning, or clever arrangements with men and affairs may not be substituted for repentance and faith and a contrite heart.

Take the case of a man who many years before defrauded a fellow-man in a business transaction. He may have prospered, yet suffers from inquietude of soul. The scar remains through the years. He wishes to feel right about this matter. He has been attending church and reading the Bible. But he has not yet felt that he may take the sacrament. He has a battle with himself and then seeks the man whom he had wronged and makes liberal restitution. His conscience tells him he did that which was right. Surely now he may partake of the sac-

rament and have the joy of the Lord. A man who desires to return to God, and who arranges to wipe out the evil he has done to a fellow-man, surely has no other difficulty in his way. His sin was only against that certain man: inasmuch as he did it to that man only, surely his way is now clear.

That was the situation of Jacob at Jabbok. The hour had come for the final advance which would mark his return to his homeland. He sent over Jabbok his wives and his eleven sons and all he had. Yet he himself delayed. He was alone. Were there misgivings? Had he overlooked anything in his calculations? Did forebodings trouble him, so he sought the solitude of which we read? Was there a presentiment that all was not right? If so, such forebodings were dramatically realized. Out of the dark a hand seized him. It gripped tightly. What did it mean? Of course, an enemy. Who else would hinder him? It was a challenge. Very well, he would meet it. It must be Esau. A flash of light fell on the man's face. No; it was not Esau. Who was this combatant? Whoever he was, Jacob would overcome him. Not now, at the point of the consummation of all his plans, might any human force thwart him. Through his mind flashed thoughts of all the years of his work, now in jeopardy; of Leah, of Rachel, of his eleven sons; of Canaan, the land of his fathers—God help him triumph!

"There wrestled a man with him until the

breaking of the day,"—and Jacob could not prevail. In unyielding embrace the antagonists held each other through the long hours of an endless-seeming night. Then a hopeless dawn began to break. Gradually Jacob's strength ebbed. Finally the unknown combatant, with a revelation of reserve power unused, crippled Jacob for life with a touch on the hollow of his thigh. " Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank." What otherwise could only have meant an accident to a progenitor of their race, was remembered as a perpetual custom, because the universal spiritual significance of the event should never be lost.

Jacob was vanquished. Someone greater than Jacob held the pass to the land of his fathers and reunion with his loved ones gone before. Only by permission of this One, and His blessing, might Jacob enter. Jacob had met God face to face. God had conquered him. But he had conquered him to bless him. He had become a new man—God's man. Self-will was crippled. On the other side of Jabbok a great man went limping. But he had that new and wonderful name, Israel, " Prince with God." The strategist was defeated. But the penitent was victorious.

VI

GOD'S AMERICA

"Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

—LUKE 4: 25-26.

THE founders of America sought freedom to worship God.

The Jewish nation offers the only parallel to the religious beginnings of this American Republic. Palestine was settled by the descendants of that Abraham who came to it as a pilgrim from distant Chaldee seeking the free exercise of Jehovah worship apart from the prevalent idolatry of his native land. The later Jews, of Jesus' day, still believed intensely in their nation as God's Israel.

Jesus attempted to enlarge the horizon of the Nazareth Jews on the Sabbath day when He addressed them in their synagogue. He did not wish to break down their sense of being God's chosen people, but to show them the Israel God meant.

Jewish patriotism had come to believe that God favored Israel for her own sake, rather than for the purpose of making Abraham's seed a blessing to all the nations of the earth. God's good-will was blindly accepted as the special prerogative of the Jews. But Jesus declared in their synagogue: " God's favor has not been, and will not be monopolized by Israel. In the time of Elias, though Israel was in dire distress, God's favor was signally bestowed on a foreigner, a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon. With many lepers in Israel, at a later day, crying for healing, God's kindness singled out a foreigner, a Syrian, for its object."

Patriots who would believe nothing good beyond their own borders could not endure such a recital of history. The first bewilderment of Jesus' audience quickly gave way to bitter resentment for their injured national pride. The citizens cast Jesus out of the synagogue and attempted to kill Him.

America, settled by the Pilgrim Fathers, the Puritans, the Quakers, and the Scotch, has had a religious consciousness stamped upon itself as God's America.

American patriotism has ample foundations for declaring this land to be " God's Country." But we may be sure that Jesus would lead the American thought of this generation to the conviction that God has made America great because He has a definite plan for her, which is a sacred trust. An unwillingness to be a blessing to the world means

America's betrayal of God's confidence in her. If America is to fulfill her mission for God, America will first need to have a great national revival of religion. The Jesus who spoke to His people in Nazareth would have America rise to a great patriotism with an international vision of service; would have Americans believe in the America God meant, God's America.

The relationship on which Christian men may pride themselves is not based on union to each other in one national family, but on union to each other as human beings without regard to nation or race. Men may justly feel themselves honored as creatures of God, who may also become children of one Heavenly Father by accepting Jesus as their Saviour. But since one's nationality is not of one's own choice, the only worthy national pride is that of the service one's country may contribute to the world.

Jesus was not ashamed of being a Jew. No Jew worthy of the name ever has been ashamed of his wonderful people. No one can question Jesus' loyalty to His own race. When the occasion for it arose, Jesus proclaimed to a foreigner, a Samaritan, that superiority of His own people which God had decreed, in the words: "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4: 22). To Jesus it was a matter of pride that God had promised their father Abraham that "in his seed should be blessed all the nations of the earth." Yet this conception of the lofty mission of

His nation made Him impatient with the Jewish provincialism displayed at Nazareth.

Jesus owed much to the Jewish race. Unquestionably He was mindful of this fact. The mission of Jesus could not have been fulfilled had He been of any other nationality. Being born a Jew and imbibing Jewish traditions, having the use of the Jewish moulds of thought and the tools of a spiritual language, by the providence of God these became invaluable assets to Him. As a Roman or a Grecian, Jesus would have been impossible, humanly speaking.

Yet the conscious possession of the advantages of being a Jew did not make Jesus a bigoted Jewish nationalist. Jesus as a Jingoist is unthinkable. At a time of intense patriotic aspirations Jesus decisively disappointed the expectations of His fellow townsmen. So soon as His developing talents presaged a brilliant career, and He attracted attention to Himself as a man whose influence would be felt in contemporaneous life, an expectation was kindled that He might measure up to the requirements for a "David's Son," to restore the glory of Jewry. He shattered that hope whenever it arose.

The episode at Nazareth was not an isolated incident of Jesus' international attitude. A Roman soldier, a centurion, declared his faith in Jesus' spiritual effectiveness, and the Master's enthusiasm was winged to a height from which He beheld the peoples from afar inheriting equally with the fore-

fathers of Israel the privileges of Divine favor. "Many," He declared on that occasion, "shall come from the east and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God." Once, likewise, when two Greek visitors were brought to Him, Jesus' imagination pushed into the future as He prophesied that He should draw unto Himself "all" men. With unmistakable significance, on another occasion, the nationality of the one leper who had the grace of thankfulness, was pointed out in the words: "and he was a Samaritan." An illustration of Jesus' broad internationalism is in His story of "The Good Samaritan." In that exquisite character sketch Jesus deliberately created His hero of a despised race. On the dark background of Jewish narrowness and prejudice, as represented by Priest and Levite, Jesus portrayed the glorious humanitarianism of a foreigner—a Samaritan. What superb daring that was!

Thus, in the short records of Jesus' career, five instances of His international temper have already been noted. These references do not exhaust the material on which to base a study of Jesus' mind, but they are sufficient for the purpose. Jesus strove to enlarge the range of human sympathies beyond national boundary lines, He was the first great Cosmopolitan--the citizen of the world rather than the Jewish citizen. With Him, the distinction on which men might pride themselves was not particu-

larly based on their relationship to each other in one national family, but as human beings created of one God.

So every nation which knows Jesus has readily appropriated Him for her own. There is little racial antipathy to overcome in accepting Jesus Himself, even by those who otherwise are of anti-semitic prejudice. The children of every nation say their little prayers to Him and think of Him as of their own nation and tongue. The painters of all nations, in presenting their ideals of the face of Jesus, show how they think of Him as of their own nationality. The Italian study of His face has a touch of the predominant Italian countenance, the German likewise, so also the Spanish. Jesus has appealed distinctively to every nation: He is not the Jew, He is the man of all countries. And early Christianity showed its amazing results in a thorough Jew like Simon Peter, as he was brought to the conviction he uttered: " God has taught me not to call any man common or unclean." The tremendous influence of Jesus transformed Saul of Tarsus, a " Pharisee of the Pharisees," so that he declared at Athens: " God has made of one flesh all men who dwell on earth."

No American worthy of the name fails to appreciate this wonderful country. No matter how intense a patriot any American may be, he can hardly over-estimate the glory of America. We who have been born beneath the Stars and Stripes

feel justified to echo the words of old: "Let my right hand forget her cunning—let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem (America) above my chief joy!"

But it is possible for intense Americanism to fall into the same error as beset the Jewish patriotism of Jesus' day, which supposed that God favored Israel for her own sake rather than for an international mission, for a "blessing to all the nations of the earth." Jesus' message to the Jews of His day was: "Let us think in terms of humanity, not merely in terms of one section of humanity—even if that section be glorious Jewry." And Jesus' message to America is: "Let us think in terms of humanity, not merely in terms of one section of humanity—even if that section be glorious America." To nations, as to individuals, the law of heaven is, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all."

What is the mission of America? Is there a purpose discernible as God's plan? How could America serve the world?

No student of history expects America to rival ancient Greece in contributions of learning and art. Nor can one deceive himself regarding the effectiveness of "culture" to bless the world. The lessons of history, in the stories of national grandeur and achievement and then moral decay and degeneracy, are too often read to permit illusions. And the contemporaneous newspaper history of man-

kind records only that rascals, if they be educated, become educated rascals; and that, whether individuals or nations.

May our "blessing to all the nations of the earth" be our political institutions? Have they any saving power? Are we not compelled to realize, as we read of the pure democracies of the ancient Greek city-states, that liberty without righteousness soon degenerates into license and prepares for a new cycle of autocracy?

Have we scientific discoveries and the application of them to practical use, which will really bring blessings to the world? We now have the telephone and telegraph and automobile and the airplane and the radio. Yet what all have the ancients had? Yet they used their achievements only to destroy one another, and powerful empires have obliterated themselves so only the archæologist can restore even the memory of them. The secret of many engineering feats, and of the production of certain metals, remains buried with the nations who have descended into oblivion. How much else of achievement is also forgotten in China, in Egypt, in Kish, in Peru?

Do we suppose some moral reforms or social ameliorations really hold in them that revolutionary new life which the world needs? We have Prohibition: so have the Turks, and have had for centuries. Have we any new contributions to economic welfare, the expectation from which might

be that the end of such materialism would be anything else than confusion, except first human nature be changed? Is it not tragic blindly to trust in the effectiveness of social palliatives and legislative corrections? Christian America is entitled to laws which guarantee respect for her religious institutions and opinions. But there is no regenerating power in parliamentary enactments. So long as the tree is evil the fruit will be evil; the legislative shears may cut off here a fruit and there a fruit, but so long as the tree itself is evil it will express itself, if not in one branch, then in another, in new evil fruit.

America's immense wealth is no conspicuous blessing or service to the world. America is not the first great banker nation the earth has known. And the ability to loan nations money is not doing anything for their salvation, or for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Wealth only offers fuel for the fire of the world's self-immolation.

Many Christians hope America will unite in the League of Nations. But surely America will not deceive herself into believing that any pact, contract or alliance for peace will endure so long as there is greed, hatred and jealousy in the hearts of nations. Nor will anger and malice cure themselves. The world's statesmen anticipate further and more terrible wars, and a spirit of optimism, founded on unregenerate human nature, is indeed blindness in face of the facts as they exist today.

America could give the world the gospel of Jesus Christ, which has power to save. This would be the greatest contribution of blessing any nation has ever made to the world. But let America be clear that this involves not primarily money and organization, but sincerity of belief in Christianity itself.

The nature of the Foreign Missionary enterprise is rapidly changing. With the development of the world-vicinity by means of the radio transmission of information everywhere, missionary propaganda must meet a new test. Soon there will be no more heathen in the sense of those who know nothing of the outside world. Even today every murder trial in America entails heavy telegraph charges for transmission of all its details to such foreign lands as formerly were generally classified as Foreign Missionary Territory. The missionary can no longer deliver a message which has not the background of the land which sent him. The only preaching of the gospel under American auspices which will be convincing will be that of the life of America. If America be the land of murderers, bootleggers, Sabbath desecrators, pleasure-seeking, money-mad, God-neglecting people, she may just as well eliminate sending men and money for missions, because her own life will more than counterbalance the effect of her attempted propaganda.

If America is to justify God's confidence in her, America will need to listen to Jesus Christ as she has not yet done. A national revival of religion

must precede any attempt of America to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Or is it folly to speak of a distinct purpose of God with this nation? Shall the following statements express our convictions? The supreme concern for America is America. Our wealth is of our own creation, due to our own superb abilities, and in no sense given us as a trust. Our national ancestry means nothing. The coming of Pilgrims, Puritans, Quakers, Scotch, however interesting a theory may be built on the peculiar nature of their emigration to these shores, yet was an accidental matter. We are great because we deserve to be great and our superiority is inevitable and must always endure. So God particularly favored America, if God had anything to do with it at all, because God recognized the intrinsic worth and attainments of Americans.

Jesus as patriot spoke to the Jewish patriots in the synagogue of Nazareth. It was His desire to enlarge rather than belittle the glory of Jewry. In place of the provincialism of His co-patriots, He offered a world-wide vision of national service. Jesus would not minimize Israel's pride in her possession of Divine favor, but have her realize why this favor was extended, and that it constituted a trust God reposed in her.

Our Christian convictions do not lead us to lessen our glorying in America. We believe God watched at Columbia's cradle. The Almighty Him-

self directed the infant steps of this people and led her to the discovery of the rich treasures with which He has endowed her hills and valleys, her mountains, rivers and plains. As over night, the magic land has arisen and her glories and her wealth have become the astonishment of all the world and have drawn all nations unto her. But America, the chosen, has her mission to fulfill, a sacred trust imposed of God to send forth to all the world the message of salvation, of good-will and international brotherhood made effective by her own faith and devotion to Jesus Christ.

Anything less than a predominantly Christian America, God's America, doing effective missionary work, sending one hundred missionaries for every one now sent, with her developing radio broadcasting preaching the gospel to every creature, will be a betrayal of God's confidence and the end must be judgment.

If, by the grace of God, America may repent, know her mission, purify herself, and justify the ideals of her God for her, then the proudest assertion a man might make would be " I am an American." And then all the suffering of all the ages wherein men died for the hope of the Kingdom of God, for universal liberty and fraternity, will be crowned with glorious achievement:

" Of such a land have men in dungeons dreamed,
And with the vision brightening in their eyes
Gone smiling to the fagot and the sword."

VII

THE AGED CHRIST

"His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow."—REV. 1 : 14.

THE world was providentially prepared for the coming of Jesus. Equally is it true that in many respects the world was providentially unprepared for Jesus' coming.

The unity of the world under the Roman Empire, the world peace, the yearning of mankind, the failure of Jewish legalism, these and many other circumstances have frequently been brought to attention as illustrating how God sent forth His son in "the fulness of the time."

This supplementary truth, however, is evident, that the world was providentially unprepared, at the time of Jesus' coming, for preserving to posterity certain features of Jesus' external life which are of utmost interest and seemingly serious importance. There must have been deep divine reasons for these irreparable losses.

On the isle of Patmos John, the beloved disciple, received a dazzlingly vivid revelation of the aged

Christ. Jesus materialized Himself before John in a form expressive of His infinite years: " his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." The apparition shocked John. Never before had he so seen Jesus. He tells us that when he thus beheld Him he " fell at his feet as dead." He knew that Jesus had been from everlasting; but he swooned when " the Ancient of Days " was dramatically unveiled.

The revelation was not meant to be a secret. The contrary was solemnly emphasized. " Write the things which thou hast seen," were Jesus' words immediately upon John's recovery. The Patmos portrayal of Jesus was essential revelation. We need it today. The dazzlingly vivid realization of the eternal Christ hurls mortal men in awe to their faces before Him. This age, with its tendency to colossal egotism and flippant irreverence, needs to see again the deep foundations of the Rock of Ages, and behold on Calvary that One in whom was the culmination of the infinite wisdom of God.

The revelation which unveiled Christ as an old, old man, was a vital corrective for such historic imagination as would center attention exclusively on the human Jesus; and the providential unpreparedness of the world, in certain respects, when Jesus came, emphasizes the purpose of God to prevent mankind from losing sight of the eternal Christ Who alone is the basis of our confidence in God's redemptive work.

Affection for the historic Jesus is natural to the Christian. It is spiritually exhilarating to have made real to us the Jesus of history. With reverent hands to reconstruct the scenes amid which the Master lived is the the devotional equivalent of the Easter morning bringing of spices and fine linen for the body of Jesus. Who would have the temerity to comment on it disparagingly? Eagerly Jesus' devotees scan every new book with the title of "Life of Christ." If to any degree it yields a fresh viewpoint on His story, it is rushed into many editions. The chief demand made of such a treatise is that it make Jesus more real. The desire is to see Him again as He walked of old in Palestine.

There is keen sense of loss in not having seen Jesus in the flesh nor having had preserved the external features of His activities as helps toward understanding Him. In compensation for such loss, there is eager searching for information concerning the outward aspects of Jesus' ministry. The geography, customs, manners, history of His land and times have become of vital interest. A spade thrust revealing a single line of writing on an ancient stone, affecting the story of Jesus, moves the world. Details about the "Life and Times of Jesus" become invaluable treasures of Christian knowledge. To have Jesus vividly portrayed as He lived of old, that the distance of the years might be bridged, is a longingly voiced desire to which no disciple is insensible.

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

Yet the futility of the search for details of Jesus' earthly life is pathetic. A few words of doubtful authenticity, which offer a vague description of Jesus' physical appearance, become tragically important. What emphatically impresses the mind of the student is the meagerness of reliable information concerning the outward aspects of Jesus' life. The things that are lacking in the gospels are noteworthy. Seemingly vital information is lost irretrievably, and the knowledge of Him which His contemporaries had is as completely expunged as that only specimen of His handwriting which was committed to the sand.

By the will of God in sending Jesus before permitting some slight scientific developments, the world was unprepared for registering on photographic plates for posterity the facial expressions of Jesus or perpetuating in moving pictures His gestures of interpretations, His smiles, His tears, His frowns, His moving lips, His kneeling in prayer, His arms in benedictions, His hands in the breaking of bread. There is no photograph of the dearest face mankind has ever looked upon—full of grace and truth—the Face of God.

There was no preparation of the world for re-

cording and reproducing Jesus' voice. So much of the meaning of words is dependent on the tones used in uttering them. Let us hear words spoken and the meaning of them is much more certainly understood than when read. What wealth of instruction is conveyed by an inflection. Accents and pauses interpret the content of an utterance. The world would have had a priceless treasure in a phonographic record of Jesus' voice when He recited the Lord's Prayer. Think of hearing, today, the actual voice of Jesus in His intercessory prayer, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the invitation, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But there is no record of the Voice of Voices.

Why was it granted others to see and hear all these things, and they be forever hidden and silent to us? God might so easily have permitted the necessary scientific development. The world was unprepared in the gospel day to render such service for the historic Jesus. The loss to us is too poignant to be dismissed with any explanation less than that we have to do with providential unpreparedness decreed by God for most serious reasons.

It was not the will of God that devotion to the historic Jesus should contribute to a diminishing consciousness of Him as the God of the ages, by whom and for whom all things were created. The Patmos revelation of Christ as an old, old

man was an additional corrective against the centering of men's attention on the human aspects of Jesus.

If we may reverently speak of Jesus as appearing "out of character," it was when "the Ancient of Days" emptied Himself of glory in His earthly rôle as a youth. His enemies were dumbfounded by His assertion: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." It had been two thousand years since Abraham. They retorted: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" With their thoughts only on the historic Jesus, they sought to kill Him when He replied: "Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." The eternal Christ walked the earth with a consciousness of His heavenly preexistence, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God." We hear Him pray: "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." It was of Jesus of Nazareth that God the Father testified: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.—Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for

ever and ever." This is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

"Crown Him the Lord of years, The Potentate of time;
Creator of the rolling spheres, Ineffably sublime."

Our day has a new sense of agedness. Discoveries in geology, astronomy and archæology have told of the hoary antiquity of the universe. We need the realization of Jesus' existence reaching into infinity back of this world. Such dazzling conception may well hurl mortal men in awe to their faces before Him. An age of egotism and irreverence needs to know the foundations of the Rock of Ages. The Cross of Calvary was the matured plan of the infinite God and of the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world. Will the wisdom of any man cause it to topple over?

John knew Jesus. Surely John needed no corrective vision? No other of the apostles knew Jesus so well as did John. What more did John need to know about the Lord? Often fond memories crowded his mind and again he communed with Jesus and again laid his head on the breast of the friend of the other days. Bright was John's mental image of the young man with black hair, and if He had a beard, of black beard, or ruddy, or light—as it may have been—we know not. But the memory of the historic Jesus was more vivid to John than we may ever realize.

Then John went to quiet Patmos. It was on the Lord's day. John was in the spirit. We may hear him pray: "Speak to me once more, Lord Jesus, that I may write to Thy churches. Let me see Thee once more!" The clouds parted. There came "the revelation of Jesus Christ," which He made of Himself to John. The beloved face appeared. The shock was frightful. He beheld the aged Christ. The exceeding whiteness, the glistening, blinding snow-whiteness revealed His exceeding agedness. It was not a vision of old age which means, as with us, weakness, finiteness, senile decay: it was a portrayal of agedness in the glory of strength and power, venerable as the stars, majestic as the sun. Jesus was an old, old man: "his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." No wonder John "fell at his feet as dead."

In deep tones those words reverberate with which the same beloved disciple John begins the Prologue to his story of the historic Jesus:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

VIII

THE THRILL OF EASTER

"*Supposing him to be the gardener.*"—JOHN 20:15.

THE commonplace is the normal. It is sensible to expect commonplace happenings. Common sense leads one to anticipate that tomorrow the sun will rise in the east and set in the west. That which common sense expects is the commonplace.

The art of comfortable living consists in adjusting one's self to the usual processes of nature. Disaster is avoided by accepting as inevitable fact that water flows downward, that the seasons rotate in order, that the law of gravity is impersonal.

The expectation of the matter-of-fact in nature does not, however, predicate the commonplace in the realm of God's grace. Jesus' parents once erred in reaching a conclusion by supposition. On their return from Jerusalem they missed Jesus, but "supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey." The supposition of the commonplace was natural, but mistaken, for Jesus was in Jerusalem in the temple. Mary Magdalene's commonplace supposition on Easter morning was

equally erroneous. She looked upon and talked with Jesus "supposing him to be the gardener."

There is no thrill in the commonplace. Mary Magdalene came to the garden of Joseph of Arimathæa early on Easter morning. She brought sweet spices with which to anoint the lifeless body of Jesus. The tomb wherein she had seen His body laid, on Friday evening, was empty this morning. Mary spoke to a man standing near her at the sepulchre, begging information concerning the disappearance of her Lord's body: "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Easter is a thrill. There can be no Easter without the thrill. If the thrill is absent there is positive proof that Easter is still meaningless. Easter can never be commonplace. No thrill—no Easter. Easter cannot be celebrated prosaically. Only unbelief silences the Easter bells and reduces Easter to a matter-of-fact, formal, calendar date. Do we know Easter? Do we need to confess an absence of a genuine Easter thrill? If we must admit a lack of the Easter joy, let us pray that our thoughts of Mary Magdalene's Easter experience may bring us the overwhelming message we need. For we know that the Easter story was the source of early Christian enthusiasm: and we know something vital is lacking if we have no part or share in that ecstacy.

The discovery of Mary Magdalene that Jesus was not dead, but living, burst on her bewildered

mind when Jesus uttered her name. Substitute your name for hers. If you feel a presence by your side, listen for your name to be spoken. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary!"

The thrill of Easter, which can come only to Christ's disciples, consists in the realization that one's friendship with Jesus has brought not only an elevating fellowship with the noblest character of history, but, far exceeding that, has resulted in an intimate living companionship with One Who is as alive today as ever He has been, is as near us today as He ever was to His disciples of old, and Who is not only good and the inspiration to the best within us, but is God, with all the power and wealth of the Creator of the worlds, whose desire it is to bless our friendship without limit in preparation for our entrance into His eternal kingdom.

Jesus would not have been forgotten even had there been no Easter.

No friendship of ours with good men and women fails to enrich our lives. No companionship with the great and noble souls of past ages, through the written words they have left us, is without impress on our own characters. How much more must this have been true of those who had the privilege of knowing Jesus when He walked this earth? Association with the historic Jesus wrought transformation of character in those who became acquainted with Him. Even had there been no Easter, could Simon Peter ever be the same again after three

years of knowing Jesus? Do you suppose he could ever have forgotten the Master? Or could Matthew have gone back to his old life unchanged? No, Jesus would never have been forgotten. The story of His life would have been lovingly preserved in oral and written tradition. It would have come to us, even if there had been no Easter: even if Jesus were not Divine. The lure of Jesus' personality would have defied oblivion. He would be in our Halls of Fame as an "immortal" among the children of men.

Had there been no Easter there would not have been the expunging of Jesus' name, but love and admiration only would have remained in the hearts of Jesus' first disciples. And those who would have learned to know Jesus by way of the memorials left posterity by His first friends, would have endorsed the love and esteem of His first friends for Him and so would have the image of a nobler Plato, a more winsome Socrates, and an even greater humanitarian Abraham Lincoln.

The worship of Jesus would not have developed, however, had there been no Easter. Jesus' friends would not have written hymns to Him, built churches for Him, prayed to Him, worshipped Him as God, talked to Him daily, gone to the uttermost ends of the earth to proclaim Him, would not have joyfully died for Him. Easter alone caused that worship. Mary, and all the disciples, not only adored the memory of Jesus during the remainder

of their lives, but worshipped Him as God because of the conviction that He had been resurrected from the dead. Had Easter only meant that Jesus had escaped death on Friday by tricking His enemies, that He had shammed death or had been merely in a comatose state, there could have been no ecstatic worshipping. Easter meant, not that Jesus was still living, but that He had arisen from the dead. The chief representative of the early Church group formulated the essential doctrine of the resurrection in his statement: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Without Easter, the loving memory of Jesus treasured in the hearts of His friends would have been poignant grief. There is no contradiction in this. Memory, even loving memory, may be a cruel tyrant. When "Memory is the only friend that grief can call its own," how bitter may be that sweet memory, if it is without hope! Without the Easter thrill and climax, the coming of Jesus into the lives of His friends would have ended in an unfulfilled longing, whether the nature of the longing would have been definitely clear to them or not: something would have been lacking; there would have been a dread void.

Do we not appreciate what Paul meant when he said that we, Jesus' friends, "are of all men most miserable" if there be no Easter? This would

have been true at the first because Jesus had made His friends feel more deeply and longingly, reach out for the unknown more insistently, than they would have done had they not known Him. Hearts were more susceptible to cruel disappointments than could have been the case had Jesus not so strongly lured them. The best of His friends would have wandered on among the empty tombs near Calvary till in despair they would have died of broken hearts. If there had been no Easter Jesus would indeed have left His friends "of all men most miserable."

Easter ecstatically satisfied the longing of Jesus' friends. It was more than joy over the restored companionship of an earthly friend. It was the dazzling confirmation of their incipient and faltering faith in His Divinity. It fulfilled, and more than fulfilled what previously they had scarce dared to believe; that their Friend was truly the eternal Son of God. They found themselves to be intimates of God.

Easter was a confirmation to believers, not an offer of proof to unbelievers. Only to His friends did Jesus show Himself after His resurrection. He did not go to Pilate, nor present Himself to Annas, nor appear to Caiaphas, nor manifest Himself to the Sanhedrin. Mary Magdalene visited with Jesus after His resurrection, on several occasions Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, He proved Himself alive to above five hundred persons at one time,

but they were "brethren." There was no Easter thrill for the enemies of the Lord. By the same principle on which Jesus refused the demand of His enemies for "signs and wonders," during His ministry, He refused the demonstration of His resurrection. It was not God's method for bringing men to saving faith. Such faith must be created without compelling objective evidence. Man may not demand from God the proofs he may desire. Ofttimes Jesus could have prayed to His Father and have had endorsement of the coming of "more than twelve legions of angels." Consistently He refrained from such use of His power to create faith. Easter had no message to Jesus' enemies: it was a confirmation to His friends of their highest hopes. Easter is not a challenge to unbelief: Easter is a confirmation to loving hearts: "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him."

That human creatures of this earth may actually walk and talk with Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, is the most staggering thought which mortal mind may receive. Yet this was just exactly the experience of Mary Magdalene on Easter morning. She found herself talking with the Son of God. Her companionship which had been with the best of men and noblest of teachers, became exalted into a personal friendship with God. The ecstacy which must have resulted from the realization that Jesus was living, and that He was living

because He was risen from the dead, and that He was risen from the dead because He was more than man, the ecstacy of this realization cannot be stated in human words. That was the thrill of Easter. Easter and the commonplace, like life and death, are mutually contradictory.

Easter forever banishes the commonplace from life because it is a continuing experience. It did not mean that Mary Magdalene, and the others, were to have a living friend who was God to be with them on Easter day, or for a few additional days of sojourn with them, but that they were to have that living, real, personal Friend with them all the rest of their lives and forever. Their continuing Friend was God, with all the power and wealth of the Creator of the worlds, whose desire it would be to bless the friendship without limit in preparation for their entrance into His eternal kingdom. Who can measure the expectations of benefits to be derived from such a friendship? Do you understand why, without flinching, " they went through peril, toil and pain; they met the tyrants' brandished steel, the lions' gory mane; they bowed their necks the death to feel "—nor would they avoid it by uttering one single disloyal word? They had His presence!

Easter meant that Jesus' disciples would always have their risen Lord immediately with them. During the forty days following Easter He defined, by illustration, how and under what conditions He

would be with them. It would be in a different way from the nature of His presence before Calvary's event. But He would be with them, and with their successors in faith, till the end of the world, as alive as ever He had been, as near as ever He had been. There is no reason to believe that Jesus withheld this comforting assurance till His very last words. Especially as it is impossible to conceive that Mary Magdalene or any other of Jesus' friends did not formulate the question with trembling lips so soon as the first gasp of recognition was past. Do you not hear Mary's plea, "And you will never, never leave us again, Lord Jesus?"

With confidence it may be assumed that many more questions were asked and answers given and explanations vouchsafed, than those recorded in the brief summary of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene. What incoherent words must have fallen from Mary's lips: "You! It is You: Lord Jesus?—You are alive? You are really alive!—But You died on the Cross!—How can it be?—But You are here!—Please speak!" And after the rapture of assurance, we cannot fail to hear the plaintive cry: "Are you going to leave us alone again?" Surely from the first Easter appearance, Jesus answered the question of trembling hearts by the assurance: "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

To you, is all this Easter story without meaning? Is Easter still only a date on the calendar? We

read that Mary came to the tomb on that resurrection day, " when it was yet dark." The words describe a time of day, but might also be used to describe a soul condition. In common with all Jesus' disciples, Mary had no expectation of the supernatural: " it was yet dark." That first Easter day dawned with the depressing expectation of the matter-of-fact: Jesus was dead: memory alone was the treasure of His friends.

Are you still wandering among the tombs of the dead? Is there no thrill—no Easter? You have not heard anyone speaking your name? The only one you see is a gardener?

There was then no Easter at the first, and so there is none now. Jesus' first disciples were deceived, and they built their own lives in a lie. Jesus is dead, as are Plato and Socrates. They all have left us with only the deeper grief and hopelessness.

But will you seek? Do you not see at least a gardener?

The Gardener was waiting for Mary Magdalene. Quietly and unobtrusively He had been standing by her side. She asked only for the commonplace: " tell me where thou hast laid him." A single word fell from the Gardener's lips in answer: " Mary! "

IX

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

I. BREAD

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
—MATTHEW 4:4.

MAN lives by bread.

It is a becoming attitude for men to say "grace" before they eat and thereby acknowledge that the sources of life's provisions, on which they depend, lie in hands other than their own.

The word "bread," in its generic sense, includes all foodstuffs needful for sustaining physical life. "Give us this day our daily bread," is a petition for all the necessaries of bodily subsistence.

Man can devise and create the equipments for highly organized social life: he can build factories, erect cities and construct transportation facilities. Yet the continuing usefulness of these things rests on food supply. The world's gigantic and complicated industrial developments are dependent on the sufficiency of crops. Hunger cannot be assuaged with houses and factories. There is no substitute

for the sun and the rain. Man needs bread to live. In his dependency on bread man is at one with the brute creation, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea.

" Bread " was the first fundamental problem Jesus faced and thought through, and fought through, in His terrific wilderness conflict at the beginning of His ministry. The bread and hunger question included the whole human struggle for subsistence with its related experiences of privation, pain and sorrow.

Respect for our Master might well cause us to shrink from using the phrase " The Temptations of Jesus." It might seem derogatory to His character to suggest that He was really tempted. Yet the story of His temptations is known to us only because Jesus Himself related it to His disciples. There were no witnesses in the wilderness. Matthew and Mark and Luke tell us how Jesus was " tempted of the devil " because this truth contains an essential element of God's revelation of Himself.

Jesus emerged from the great trial with clearly defined convictions concerning the Will of God. However uncertain He may have been before and during the days of conflict, after He entered His ministry there was never any wavering in His course of thought and action.

Jesus' own estimate of the purpose of His coming, as revealed by His wilderness decision, may

cause us to see in some modern presentations of the nature of Jesus' ministry a strange variance from His own conclusions.

What would have been the consequence had Jesus yielded to the pressure of the forty days of fasting? Suppose He had turned stone into bread? Perhaps we can at least dimly sense the wisdom of God.

The temptations of Jesus wonderfully declare the consecration of our Lord to His Messianic task. And men, in the midst of their struggle for subsistence, need the viewpoint adopted by Jesus, that men do not live by bread alone as the beasts of the field, but as sons and daughters of God supremely need every revelation that comes from God.

" Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

" And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

" But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Jesus was sorely tempted by reason of long endured hunger to use His Divine power of which He had just become conscious, to change the established laws of God by making bread from stones; yet He finally determined that He would not thus

eliminate for Himself the necessity of hunger if He did not also abolish hunger for mankind.

The nature of this bread temptation it is not difficult to understand.

At His baptism, Jesus had gained consciousness of His unique Sonship, and there now opened before Him the road of His Messianic career.

Led of the spirit into the wilderness, Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights. He was hungry. Realizing that He was the Son of God, a natural course of action suggested itself. He could, with a word, turn stone into bread. The strength of that temptation is self-evident. There was the poignancy of His own hunger pains. Bread meant His own easement. Besides, man lives by bread, and if He would continue to live He must have bread.

The reasons stated by Jesus on which He finally grounded His decision indicate that the bread problem had assumed a larger aspect than that which merely embraced His own personal physical easement. Jesus was conscious of Himself as both Son of God and Son of Man. As Son of God He might well use His power to turn stone into bread. But as Son of Man He would not ask for exemptions from privations to which man is subject. He must share the common burden of mankind, even to the tasting of man's death. But might He not inaugurate His Messianic career by the removal of the curse of hunger and its allied disabilities and anguishes?

It would have meant a glorious beginning of His ministry. The creation of unlimited bread supply for the world would have guaranteed His popular acceptance by the people. An overwhelming credential for His claims would have been His. There might also well be added to the elimination of hunger, the removal, by His word, of all pain and sickness. Jesus was conscious of His ability thus to remove the pains and sorrows of men. What a tremendous appeal! What a temptation! It would cost only His powerful word as the Son of God! Why not do it?

The basis of Jesus' decision was positively and significantly stated by Him: " Man shall not live by bread alone."

Jesus did not find it necessary to rest the answer to the momentous issue which confronted Him on any confusing or involved process of reasoning. There were no sophistries or perilous premises. Jesus knew an objective source of authority concerning the Will of God. God's Word was to Him not something vaguely evolved from one's inner consciousness, but a written document. To that He turned and to its commands surrendered Himself unconditionally. He sought the appropriate page of God's book.

The concern of Jesus was to answer correctly the question: " What is the All-wise Will of God in this matter of turning stone into bread? " Under other circumstances, later in His ministry, Jesus declared

this same mental attitude of His in the words: "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me" (John 6: 38).

Jesus was in doubt about the Will of God. There could have been no temptation had there been no doubt. Jesus may have carried with Him in the folds of His cloak the roll of the law and of the prophets. Or He may have had a perfect memory of the text of the book of Deuteronomy. It is surely significant that in answer to each of the three wilderness temptations Jesus quoted excerpts from Moses' farewell address, as ground sufficient for His own momentous decisions.

When Moses' words were clearly fixed in His mind, Jesus was resigned to die of hunger if necessary. It was clear to Him that He would not work exemption for Himself from a law under which man must live. Was it a wise and just law that there should be the possibility of death by hunger? So far as He was concerned, if it was the law of God for man it was a wise and just one and He would not disturb it. "It is written, Man—" was sufficient for our Lord.

What the Word of God signified was that the material welfare of man was not the supreme consideration for man: "Man liveth not by bread alone." Whether man have sufficient bread to sustain physical life is a matter to be left to God's providence. Let man say of His Lord: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Jesus' decision was not in the nature of a denial that man lives by bread, but was an assertion that man's horizon was not to be limited as is that of beasts who live by bread alone. The bread question is, and must remain subsidiary. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness," Jesus said later, "and all these things will be added unto you."

Theories of economic betterment which may loosely be termed "socialistic" have much in common with the ideals of human welfare which are the goal of the teachings of the Kingdom of God. Yet such social ameliorations are not the exclusive objectives of Christianity. Man does not live by bread alone. Materialism has no horizon beyond bread. Jesus refused that horizon as being unworthy of man's ultimate destiny. He insisted that human vision embrace the larger perspective which must include every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God as being of even greater importance than the elimination of suffering.

In Jesus' subsequent public ministry there was no deviation or any wavering from the clear-cut conclusion which He reached in the wilderness. The touch of certainty was a marked characteristic of His activities. He knew Himself, and He knew what was God's Will. The wavering and the doubt had been left in the wilderness. Even when the assault against Him grew tumultous, His poise was perfect.

Jesus did not make Himself Israel's magic Bread King. Neither would He undertake to become the world's universal healer. He emphatically discouraged His contemporaries in any such expectations regarding Himself.

Jesus did not heal all the sick He could have healed. He healed sufficient of such that His power was unquestioned by those whose minds were open to conviction. But the subsidiary nature of His healing power was clearly set forth by Him: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

Jesus did make bread. He fed thousands of hungry people. But when those who had been fed desired to make Him King, their bread-supplying King, He withdrew from them (John 6). They had misinterpreted His mission: He would not have them place a wrong emphasis on one phase, a minor one, of His ministry.

Jesus knew Himself and His Messianic work to be man's supreme necessity. Material bread was of lesser importance than spiritual bread to men whose souls were to live forever. So Jesus declared Himself, as Saviour, the "true" or vital bread by which man must live.

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven;

but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

" For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." " I am that bread of life."

" Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."

" I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

" He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Your Lord is far from insensible to your struggle for subsistence and its allied suffering and pains. A more brotherly relationship among men will ameliorate much of the injustice and hardship of our common life. Your Lord's teaching creates such brotherliness among men in the hearts of those who accept Him.

Yet your Lord would not change the wise laws of God for man. Particularly would he have you realize the supreme truth that man does not live by bread alone. You are not to be as the lower creation. You are destined, in a little while, to enter into the everlasting inheritance of sons and daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Your supreme need is the spiritual bread which is the word proceeding out of the mouth of God.

You need God most of all: and God, in Christ, is supplying that need of Himself. It is soul bread. Without it, your soul dies.

Or would you have had it otherwise? Would you have made bread supreme? Or if not supreme, yet would you have had it made of equal importance to God's revelation of Himself? In your judgment was Jesus unwise? Or, for other reasons, is the course He adopted still unsatisfactory to you? Since He rested His conclusion on the Will of God, would you also indict the wisdom, or benevolence, of that Will? Suppose Jesus had yielded to the pressure of the temptation which beset Him!

Blatant and shallow atheism may proclaim: "If I were God I would turn every stone to bread, and make a healing herb of every blade of grass!"

Yes? And then what would you have? Contentment? Are those who have material possessions in abundance conspicuously contented? Is not the contrary frequently true? You know the basis of happiness is not exclusively gold.

One of the most disintegrating influences that comes into domestic life is the removal of economic necessities. The family which is held together by the struggle for subsistence too often falls apart when riches and plenty come.

The atheist who would tamper with God's world should first persuade you that he would make sons of God and not children of perdition. The Will of

God contemplates a social readjustment which will solve many of the ills of this life. But the wisdom of God has withheld unchecked ease, security and luxury that, unrestrained, would send most of mankind to hell in two generations. Man, the mankind God would train, who is more than beast, is not kept in life by bread alone.

The end of materialism is not a Millennium, but a Bedlam.

The Saviour of the world faced the bread temptation in the wilderness, and thought it through, and fought it through, then was ever thereafter sure of the course His ministry should follow, and at its end interpreted the real bread question in this wise:

" And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you."

X

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

II. MIRACLES

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
—MATTHEW 4:7.

GOD made man in His own image. "The chief end of man is to glorify God."

The Will of God may approve itself to our understanding; the wisdom and benevolence of His plans for our salvation may coincide with our own judgments of efficiency and goodness.

But if not?

Man may create a god in man's own image.

In place of the idol-gods of old, made after man's imagining, of wood or stone or gold, man may make his god of his own conceptions of wisdom and benevolence. And the chief function of such a god is the glorifying of man. Pride in one's own mental workmanship makes it easy to worship so complaisant and flattering a god.

God is the center of all things and man is subservient to God's purposes. Or man is the center of all things, and all things must revolve about his interests. Such are the alternatives.

Jesus' supreme concern during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness was to know the plan and Will of God. The second fundamental problem which Jesus faced, and thought through, and fought through, was that of the use of His miracle power. When the Will of God was made clear to Him, our Lord entered His public ministry with a definite course in mind from which He never wavered.

Jesus' resistance to the suggestion of using His miracle power to create faith in Himself and His mission is not without utmost significance to us. It would seem to indicate that God's plan for our salvation does not include such a manifestation of His power as would preclude our use of faith. God possibly is not so much concerned about getting men to accept Christ, regardless of how they come to such belief, as men might suppose their importance to God would dictate. Or perhaps the case should be stated this way: belief in Christ, produced by compelling outward proof, is not such faith as that is without which "it is impossible to please God." The importance to our own destinies of having this matter clear in our minds is self-evident. We may be awaiting something, or conditioning our belief upon something of which we shall learn, from Jesus' wilderness decision, that by the Will of God we shall die in our sins before it will be granted us.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy

city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple." The topographical situation of Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, is well known. The "pinnacle," or wing of the temple, referred to, was probably the one overlooking the deep valley of the Kedron. Josephus, describing the view from the Royal Porch, stated that "if anyone looked down from the top of the battlement he would become giddy."

"And (the devil) saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

We must continuously keep in mind that Jesus, recently conscious of His unique Sonship, was contemplating here in the wilderness the course His Messianic career should take. The temptation to inaugurate His ministry with a notable miracle was alluring. Thereby He might glorify God and gain for Himself immediately a nation-wide respectful hearing. Would not the miracle compel belief in Him?

Jesus rested His refusal to the tempting suggestion on a statement of old regarding the Will of God for man. It became clear to our Lord what that Will of God for man was, and He, as Son of Man, would be obedient as man must be. "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Jesus evidently decided, while fighting through this second temptation, that man must attain to a belief in God without being induced to it by compelling outward evidence. God cares very much that man come to a saving knowledge of Him, through Jesus Christ. But there are evidently clearly defined limits to any efforts of God in bringing man to such faith. And God, not man, remains the arbiter of that way of salvation.

The strength of any temptation lies in its appeal to desire. The suggestion to our Lord that He cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and land unharmed in the deep valley below, appealed to Him strongly. For so Jesus, by this conspicuous miracle, might immediately prove Himself accredited of God.

The strength of any temptation also lies in the realization that its object is attainable. There is no lure in the impossible, or the absurd. That which the hand may seize, causes desire. Jesus was conscious that it now clearly lay in His power, as Son of God, to perform this miracle. The quotation from the Psalms was applicable to Him: God would command the angels to keep Him unharmed. Beyond doubt He would land safely in the Valley of Hinnom.

What more glorious and effective way could be devised for bringing men to faith in Christ? Let our Lord summons all Israel to Jerusalem and have the people assembled on the sides of Olivet! Then

might the Son of God, gliding into space from His position poised on the pinnacle of the temple, dramatically descend into the yawning valley below and, with garments fluttering, come to the ground unhurt. Would not multitudes, even hundreds of thousands of people, fall on their faces before the One who had indeed come down from heaven! His message would be believed!

Such was the strength, the poignancy of the temptation which Jesus faced. He was sorely tempted to yield. Why not assent to the suggestion?

The ground of Jesus' decision is set forth without equivocation. The words contained in Moses' farewell address to Israel stated the Will of God for man. Man may not presume to put God on trial to approve himself to man. That Word of God for man must be sufficient for the Son of Man. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." God is not to be the subject of experiment by man. Man may not demand of God such proof as man may deem necessary for his faith. God alone is the arbiter of the plan of salvation.

Such was the declared Will of God for man. And when Jesus became clear in His own mind that this was the principle on which His Father was working out the destiny of mankind, He resigned Himself to it with utmost acquiescence, even though it might appear to rob Him of effectiveness for His career. He did not come to abrogate or amend a defective policy of God's. This fact He emphasized in a

subsequent statement of His function: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5: 17).

Jesus would not change God's method of bringing men to saving faith. If man, according to God's wisdom, must come to such saving knowledge without miracle manifestations, Jesus would not tamper with such a decree. Jesus was content to rest His will on the Will of God, as He later stated it: "not my will, but thine, be done."

God cares very much that man come to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He sent into the world. Bethlehem and Calvary prove that. But such knowledge of God must be created without compelling objective evidence. Man may not demand that experiments shall be made of God's being and power. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Man must follow God's plan, not his own.

Jesus' decision was not that for Him, as Son of God, there would be no need, during His ministry, for the exercise of miracle power. But Jesus concluded that God desired Him to refuse the exercise of His miracle power for bringing the world to His feet. God is not so much concerned about getting men to believe, regardless of how they come to such belief, as men may pride themselves in thinking

when they exaggerate their importance to God and would dictate God's method of procedure in His plan of salvation.

Jesus' subsequent use of His miracle power may seem erratic. At times He used it unstintingly. At times He exercised miracle power, but commanded that the fact be kept silent. Again, under circumstances apparently most favorable for its display, He refused its slightest use. Unless we understand the principle which governed Jesus' conduct after He faced, and thought through, and fought through the second temptation in the wilderness, we cannot comprehend the clear consistency of our Lord's later conduct concerning miracles. Yet it should not be impossible for us to see how throughout His ministry there was never any wavering or uncertainty or deviation from the conclusion He reached in the wilderness. During those forty days, Jesus may have been in doubt about the wisdom of not using miracle power for creating saving faith. Had there been no doubt there would have been no temptation. But no such doubt was carried over into His active ministry.

Jesus might have won all Israel, with mouths agape, to a certain sort of belief in Him, in a day. That He refused to do, and ever thereafter we see Him as one who knew Himself and knew what was God's Will. His poise was perfect even when the religious leaders hounded Him with the demand, "What sign showest thou unto us?" "What

miracles doest thou?" "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matthew 12: 38).

Jesus refused the signs, or miracles and proofs, demanded: admitting that He knew the consequences of His refusal: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4: 48). Had He desired to have men come to a certain sort of belief, regardless of how they arrived at it, the easiest course for Him to follow would have been to give them such miracle signs. But there was no hesitation: the problem had been settled in the wilderness.

Jesus used His miracle power to confirm faith already existing, and to declare the benevolence of God. Yet no fact in the life of Christ is more significant in respect to the creation of faith, than that Jesus confined the presentation of the proof of the resurrection miracle, the greatest miracle of all, to His friends. He did not appear to Caiaphas, Pilate, Annas or the members of the Sanhedrin. He manifested Himself to His disciples. He proved Himself alive to above five hundred persons at one time, but they were "brethren" (I Cor. 15: 6).

Probably the clearest exposition of this decision to discount the value of miracles for creating sav-

ing faith was given by Jesus in His story of Dives and Lazarus. Dives, in hell, requested Abraham to send one from the dead to his five brethren, yet living, so they might not come to the same place of torment. Dives argued, "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent" (Luke 16: 30). Jesus, through the answer of Abraham, declared His own settled conviction: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Jesus' mind was clear concerning the nature of the belief which might be created by the compulsion of miracles. Miracles would create wonder and fear, but not repentance and sorrow for sin: they would not result in trust in the redemptive love of Christ, and in reciprocal affection. There would be no development of the soul. Jesus was satisfied that God's plan and Will was best.

Will you, nevertheless, demand some certain proofs before you will believe? Let us state the childish demand of a prayer: "O God, I do not know whether to believe or not! If You are in existence make me believe on You! Show me a sign. Make this chair walk out of this room! Rap on this table! Then I will believe!"

If that is the only way you will believe, God would rather not have you believe at all. Contrast the nature of belief which would result from the granting of a miracle, and that which lays hold on God "though tossed about with many a conflict,

many a doubt, Fightings and fears within, without." "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

Are you satisfied that Jesus acted wisely in not yielding to the impulse to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to create belief? Or would you have had it otherwise? Jesus rested His decision on the Will of God for man: "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." But is that Will sufficient for you?

God might write His decrees on the blackboard of the skies, in letters of fire dripping from His finger tips. As an airplane writing with smoke letters, so might God dictate His messages. In His hands He might seize this sphere and shake it with earthquakes, and voice warning and doom in peals of thunder, and no knee would remain unbowed. Who questions that He who made the heavens and the earth could, with the movement of His little finger, bring terror and obedience to every human heart? But the belief created thereby would mean no more for regeneration than that of "the devils who also believe and tremble."

Jesus had no doubt of the availability of supernatural forces at His command: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" The certainty was like that in the wilderness: God would protect Him if He chose to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the

temple. But Jesus was concerned to know only what was the Will of God for the way of man's salvation.

The Will of God may approve itself to our understanding. There is satisfaction to our mortal minds in apprehending the wisdom of God for our salvation. But if all God's ways are not clear to us, shall we create a god in our own image, of our own conception of wisdom and benevolence, as a substitute god?

Or shall we realize that the Lord is God, and there is none else beside Him? That our idol god does not exist except in our own minds? Jesus rested His will in the Will of God. His supreme concern during the forty days in the wilderness was to know the plan of God. The wisdom of God denied to man the prerogative to experiment with God.

Jesus' acquiescence was, as ours should be, to the plea of God for confidence in Him, as stated by God, of old, in His words:

" For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

" For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

XI

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

III. THE GLORY OF THE WORLD

"The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."—MATTHEW 4:8.

T the very beginning of Jesus' ministry "the shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill."

How much Jesus knew of the course that lay before Him, as He entered His public ministry, is not revealed. Jesus knew the Old Testament. The Psalms and Isaiah, read by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, make clear that the path of the Servant of the Lord would be a Way to a Cross.

When did Jesus become conscious of being Messiah? We only know that at Jesus' baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, and a voice spoke from heaven. It is not necessary to suppose that anyone except Jesus heard that voice. The message of God, on that occasion, was particularly for Jesus: "Thou art my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1: 11).

In the terrific wilderness conflict at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry the third fundamental problem He faced and thought through and fought through was evidently that of the success of His mission. The vision of the kingdoms and the glory of them reveals the thoughts of Jesus' own heart. Yet the intimations of the prophets and the intuitions from the Holy Spirit would suggest " the shadow of a cross."

The clearly revealed Will of God, as stated in the Old Testament, had already enabled Jesus to define the nature of His ministry so far as " bread " and " miracles " were concerned. But in this third temptation the iron entered His soul. When He had conquered, at least for the time being, " the angels came and ministered unto him."

" The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

If familiarity with these words has not totally dulled the mind, one is swept off his feet by the stupendous and spectacular scene suggested. There is unfolded the panorama of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

We may not suppose that this temptation was merely theatric, with Jesus playing an assumed part. It was real, not artificial. Jesus " was in all points tempted like as we are." Vividly, Jesus saw the glories of the world, and He yearned for them. If He did not behold the world's kingdoms with

His physical eyes, He surely did with mental eyes, as we may see them.

Jesus was in doubt as to what He should do. Where there is no doubt there is no temptation. The Will of God was sought by our Lord, and at the end of His mental struggle He found it in the words of the Old Testament: " It is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."

God must be obeyed. The Will of God is law. That law is right because it is God's Will. " Him only shalt thou serve " is God's law for man. If that Will of God denied to Jesus the glories of the world, then He would put them behind Him and walk in whatever path God directed, even though it meant that He " tread the wine-press alone."

The significance of Jesus' decision with all which it involved for the Son of God is too deep for any mortal ever to understand, but sufficient of its dazzling meaning should penetrate our minds to cause us to fall on our knees in adoration and proclaim: " In the cross of Christ I glory."

Jesus might have made the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them His own immediately. Yet He dedicated Himself unreservedly and voluntarily, though not without bitter struggle, to the way of the Messiah. This involved renunciation of His conscious Divine power and a willingness to live only by faith in God even as mortal man must do. Thus, serving God only, Jesus became obedi-

ent to the Divine Will and wisdom concerning the path to be taken by God's Saviour of the world.

The appeal of Satan's suggestion was overwhelming. It was not the offer of something to which our Lord was indifferent, but of that for which Jesus had a consuming passion.

The third temptation reached into the deepest recesses of Jesus' heart. It seemed to offer an objective altogether right for Him in the sight of God. Jesus could have yielded to the allurement of this temptation without sin: though it would have ruined His Messianic career. Anyone else but Jesus would have yielded to it. Jesus Himself was sorely tempted as He stood at this brink of decision. And while He wavered, seeking to know God's Will, the fate of the world hung in the balance.

All the love of Christ for men pressed on Him to make the kingdoms of the world His own. Jesus longed to have men love and adore Him. In no sense was He indifferent to their response. Jesus loved mankind with a consuming passion. Even the most unlovely of the children of men were most precious to Him. Jesus longed to be king in the hearts of men. His was not a superficial or professional affectation of love, but a genuine and marvelous love which could pray even for those who nailed Him to the cross.

The impulse of affection toward men which dominated the Saviour, was akin to that in the heart of

God which caused the creation of the world and initiated the plan of salvation. The desire of God for the children of men is beyond the scope of our minds. Why did God create man? Why did God so love the world? We may only grope for some dim understanding of a social instinct in God seeking expression. The heart of God, in the ages before man was created, held a thought which found its development in the making of the world and its creatures. The heart of the Lord Jesus was the heart of God. As God loved the world, so Jesus loved the world.

The tragedy of the Saviour, as viewed by Isaiah of old, was that of being prematurely cut off from the land of the living. The Saviour was childless. Yet He would see of the "travail of his soul" and be satisfied. It was the mysterious depth of Jesus' love for men, which caused the appeal of Satan's suggestion to shake the foundations of His heart.

The dark alternative to a glorious reign over the kingdoms of the world, was also brought to the foreground by the meditation. If the Messiah, by the Will of God, is not immediately to rule the nations, what then? The description of Isaiah's suffering Servant of the Lord must have emerged into His consciousness: "he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him—we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted—he was numbered with the transgressors."

It is not too much to say that our Saviour shrank from that cup and that cross. He who was conscious of the glory He had with the Father before the world was, could contemplate only in agony of soul the humiliation and the shame of the Via Dolorosa.

The reason for the decision He made, Jesus found by reading, or recalling to mind, a declaration of God's written in the book of Deuteronomy. The words He quoted were: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." To serve God means to obey God. For man there is but one course of conduct, regardless of what the consequences may appear to involve, and that is obedience to the revealed Will of God.

It may be difficult for us to grasp the subtilty of Satan's suggestion or to sense all it embraced. There is an intimation of something more than is contained in the bare words themselves, with their apparently crude offer: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The only safe light in which to view these words, is that which falls on them from the nature of Jesus' reply. To "fall down and worship" Satan stands opposed to "(God) only shalt thou serve." The temptation was one to exercise disobedience to God, or a deviation from God's Will and plan. The choice our Lord needed to make involved the renunciation of the kingdoms of the world, and the bearing of the Cross instead, if thus "it pleased

the Lord to bruise him," and if Jesus knew of God that " he hath put him to grief."

This third temptation was not finally settled in the wilderness. In this respect the temptation differs from the previous ones. Of the first two temptations we could say that after Jesus had faced them and thought through them and fought through them in the wilderness there was never any wavering or uncertainty regarding the policies embraced by them, during His public ministry.

Of this final and bitterest trial, it may only be said that the devil " departed from him for a season." " Get thee hence Satan: " Jesus replied. When did Satan return with the same suggestions? When did Jesus address Satan again similarly?

Jesus' abrupt answer to one of His friends, on a later occasion, is recalled. His very abruptness intimates the sensitiveness of His reaction to His friend's words. There was here lacking the poise of Jesus such as He always displayed in problems and situations affecting His policies concerning " miracles " or " bread supply."

In the instance we recall, Jesus had indicated the way of the Messiah to His disciples, saying that " he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed."

Peter, answering, said unto Him: " Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But

he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan."

Not Peter, but that suggestion with its terrible appeal to Him was Satan. Against that same suggestion He struggled on the mountain top. The temptation was not ended during the forty days. The agony and shrinking from the Cross and the fear of the cup, returned in Gethsemane when " his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It again tore His heart in the " Eli, eli, lama sabachthani." The temptation was ended only when He said on the Cross, " It is finished."

Not without faltering did Jesus contemplate the alternative to the possession of the kingdoms of the world. The terrors of real temptations lie in the possibility of yielding to them.

How real was the strugggle and temptation to Jesus? Was the issue of it a foregone conclusion? Or could Jesus have submitted to Satan? The questions are vital and demand answers, for they affect the genuineness of these trials. The priesthood of Jesus is predicated on the reality of His temptations: " he was tempted in all points like as we are—therefore he is able to bear gently with the ignorant and the erring." If the offer of Satan were only a make-believe trial and did not really tempt our Lord, or if it had been impossible for Him to yield to the temptation, where is the reality of a soul-struggle?

It is impious to speak of Jesus, the Divine Son of God, as being tempted to sin. His impeccability rests on His nature, "the same in substance with the father, equal in power and glory." There is no standard of good and evil except the Will of God.

It is an entirely different matter, however, to declare that the Messiahship of Jesus was voluntary and was not of any ethical necessity. Jesus insisted, unequivocally, on this liberty and freedom of His saving work. "I lay down my life for the sheep. Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my father" (John 10: 17, 18).

As Jesus wandered in the wilderness, and stood on the mountain top, He was conscious of His Divinity and He also knew the bitter facts of the way of the Cross. He was conscious of the power to lay down His life, or to refrain from the sacrifice. His soul shrank from the Cross. Who can even faintly grasp the cost to Him? And He chose the Cross as the Will and Wisdom of God.

Do you feel entitled to despise that Cross of Christ? To be ashamed of it?

"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.—We preach Christ crucified,

unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

Before Jesus' eyes, on this mountain top, was conjured the panorama of the kingdoms of the world and their glory!

Following Jordan's pathway to the north, beyond the blue waters of Genneseret and Bethsaida's dwellings, on Syrian soil stood ancient Damascus. The Arabs called it an earthly paradise. Gardens and orchards surrounded the city. It was the goal of the caravans which came laden with silks and spices from Bagdad, beyond the desert. Farther north lay Antioch, the imperial city, proud in her Roman splendor. And beyond were Galatia and the northern provinces.

Toward the sunrise, beyond the desert, was Assyria. Ancient Mesopotamia nestled between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Did the Son of God behold all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Then He viewed man's cradle-land. From ancient Chaldee, Ur sent forth the venerable

patriarch, Abraham, the father of the Jews. Nineveh rose to His longing eyes, that great city. Once again God, in the person of His Son, brooded over Nineveh as when His recalcitrant prophet, Jonah, was sent to her. Hate Nineveh? No! The thought of God was: "And shall not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand: and also much cattle?" Babylon lay there, with her voluptuous hanging-gardens, the wonders of the ancient world, city of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. And beyond were India, and Persia, and China—worlds of human beings for whom He came to be a Ransom and a Light.

Entranced, and urged by Satan, He turned to see the kingdoms of the south. Behold the rich lands of the Nile, dotted with palm trees. Alexandria, of Egypt, great emporium of commerce, seat of learning and philosophy, city of ancient books, greeted Him. Beyond Sinai's dread mount rose the magnificent mausoleum of a Pharaoh, the pyramid which exacted the continuous labor for twenty years of 100,000 slaves. It was the land of Joseph, beyond the Red Sea, and the land of Moses, dimly illumined by the lighthouse of Pharos. Below were Memphis and Thebes, vast cities of their day; and then the lands of the sad children of Ethiopia.

Finally, did Jesus look toward the west, the fu-

ture land, the coming empires? Ephesus, the splendid, greeted His eyes. There, built at the common charge of all the Asiatic States, stood the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world, two hundred and twenty years in building. Across the Ægean Sea lay Athens, unrivalled for achievements in art and literature, immortal in the records of Greek statesmanship and military prowess. About the Acropolis were gathered the memories of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes, and Mar's Hill was waiting for the Roman Jew who was to tell of the Unknown God and the Resurrection. Sparta, the city of disciplined youth, and Corinth, whose columned temples were to remain the models of ornate architecture through the ages, passed before the focus of His eyes. Farther, by the Tiber, on her seven hills, sat Rome, the mistress of the world. From Brittany to the Euphrates her word was law. All roads led to her portals, and her power, stupendous, had broken down all barriers and all limitations. There could be no vision of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them that did not embrace the Eternal City. And then, beyond Rome? Who knows? Through the Pillars of Hercules, at the entering in of the Mediterranean, where Gibraltar watches? And beyond the great deep? Who knows how far? To the magic future land, lying unsuspected in the arms of Ocean, awaiting the Genoese navigator?

"All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of

them." What was the message from them which thrilled His being?

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountain
Rolls down the golden sand;
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call him to deliver,
Their land from error's chain."

Oh, how He loved the kingdoms of the world! How He loved the world!

Then the tides of vision receded. The glories of the kingdoms became blurred to His sight and lost in a vague horizon. The scene was contracted to the confines of Israel. Close at hand, and majestically erect, glorious Jerusalem blended into herself the dissolving view of the world. Then His tears blotted out the Holy City.

The Saviour had made His choice. It was the Will of God. It was God's way for man's salvation. Now there was darkness. What did the Holy Spirit intimate, and what did the prophets foretell?

A thin shaft of light broke through the darkness and rested on a spot not far away, but just outside the city gates:

"The shadow of a cross arose, upon a lonely hill."

XII

THE UNWELCOME GUEST

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment."—MATTHEW 22:11.

COMMERCIAL goods may appreciate or depreciate in value according to a law of supply and demand which automatically regulates such fluctuations. Articles of trade, the supply of which can be artificially controlled, are susceptible to abrupt variations in value. Rarity becomes the basis of valuation.

Spiritual valuations may also be based on rarity, and there may be a depreciation of the value of spiritual resources which cannot be selfishly controlled.

Jesus' story of the man without a wedding garment, if only casually read, may be seriously misinterpreted, creating resentment rather than acquiescence. A king, we are told, prepared a wedding banquet for his son, but found the invited guests unwilling to attend. So the king punished these guests who snubbed his kindness and then extended the invitation promiscuously and ur-

gently. Thus a motley assembly finally gathered. This democratic enlargement of hospitality is pleasing. But from this point the story takes a turn which may, at first, be bewildering: "When the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment."

Joy over the king's democratic hospitality may here yield to resentment. Pity may rise for the object of the king's severity, which seems beyond all bounds of reason and justice: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Was not the king unjust, arbitrary, despotic? The condemnation tends to incite rebellion. If the character of the king may be dealt with freely and frankly, indignation is easily created over this autocratic conduct following a deceptive cordiality. The story is not satisfactory to our conceptions of a just God, though we realize that we ought to approve and not resent the parable.

If your thought concerning the story of the wedding garment and the unwelcome guest has been at all similar to that just set forth, you should abandon every previous conclusion as you again hear the parable. You may then not only acquiesce in its conclusion, but be very sincerely thankful that our Lord uttered so needful and significant a story and you may rebuke some things in yourself and greatly praise God. Some of you may be like this

man without a wedding garment. To understand Jesus may lead to your conversion.

Among the ignoble qualities sometimes uncovered in human nature there is a base selfishness which causes the valuation of many things, not according to their worth but according to their rarity. Such selfishness tends to depreciating, despising, and counting of no value the goodness of God in the offer of His salvation on account of its very abundance.

This is not a story of a man getting into heaven under false pretences and then being thrown out. This man was not thrown out of heaven at all. He never got into heaven. He was eliminated just when heaven would have begun for him, had he been fit for heaven. The parable is staged in two worlds. The curtain between the present life and the life of the next world falls and rises at the point in the story where the king enters. The banquet begins only when the king is present. It was beyond the scope of Jesus' narrative to depict that actual banquet in heaven. He confined Himself to a judgment scene preceding the feast, when the guest without a wedding garment was cast out from the banquet hall where the assembly was gathered. He was a guest only in the sense that he was an invited person. But the invitation was cancelled before the banquet started.

Jesus' story of the cancelled invitation makes it very clear that the unwelcome guest was not singled

out arbitrarily by the king, but that he had deliberately made himself obnoxiously conspicuous. There was rasping bravado in his lack of conformity to the decent requirements of the occasion. It is evident that the reasons for this lay in himself and not in circumstances. Poverty was not the cause. Oriental kings always provided garments for their guests. The attendance had been recruited from " the highways," and the question of poverty or wealth was not involved. To guard against a misinterpretation of His story, Jesus also inserted the words " both bad and good " in His description of the guests. It was not because of the man's immorality that the king withdrew the invitation. The king had cordially invited the publicans and sinners.

An ignoble selfishness causes the value of a common gift to depreciate. To a selfish man in a poverty-stricken community the gift of a sum of money is a valued possession, but a large part of its value to him lies in the fact that he alone has that sum of money. Let the gift of the same sum of money be extended to every other man in that same poverty-stricken community, and to the selfish man the original great value of the gift is depreciated.

There is the depreciated social invitation. A man may be proud to have been asked to attend a king's banquet. His first thought is of the kindness of the king. He appraises highly the honor of being the

king's guest. But in proportion to his selfishness he wishes the list of invited guests to be restricted. This he desires not because there would be any lack of provisions, for the king's wealth is unlimited, but because he would preen himself before his fellows as being of conspicuous importance. As he meets his fellowmen and finds that they all are also invited to the banquet, the honor of his own invitation becomes depreciated to him. The kindness of the king now means nothing. Rarity was the basis of his selfish valuation.

Recall Jesus' story of the depreciated penny, as told by Matthew. Workmen were hired for labor in a vineyard and the wage agreed upon for the day's work was satisfactory. The penny was large. But at pay-time, in the evening, those same workmen "murmured" over that penny. The penny had become depreciated. The employer asked one of these men, "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" How had the penny become of less value? Simply because other men, who in this case had worked only a part of the day, by the liberality of the master were likewise receiving the penny. To shame the spokesman of the murmurers, the employer asked, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

The goodness of God cannot be "cornered" as may be some commercial articles. It cannot be monopolized, or incorporated and shares allotted. It is extended to all the world; "God so loved the

world:" Christ died sufficiently for all men: "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely:" "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him:" "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This word of God goes out into the world, to publicans and sinners, to Pharisees and Sadducees alike. The invitation is read in palaces and in the highways and hedges. It has equal force and promise in China, India and America. Does that lessen its value to you? Does that rob you of the ecstacy of having the invitation for yourself?

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" Paul asked the Romans. It is despised by some because of its abundance. For this reason Jesus said, at the close of the story of the unwelcome guest: "Many are called." But not all included in the invitation are chosen as guests.

Consider the man without a wedding garment, the unwelcome guest, as he is today in his attitude before he meets God at the Heavenly Banquet.

The man without a wedding garment is an invited person. He knows he is invited. There are no misgivings in his heart concerning his welcome. He knows very well that God supplies the deficiencies of His guests from His own plenteous wardrobe. He knows God not only invites, but urges him to the banquet in honor of His Son.

But he will make no preparation for it. He will

not receive the Baptism of repentance on the confession of sins, even though freely offered without money and without price. He will not join himself to Christ's Church. He is good enough as he is. The Sacraments? No, he does not bother with Sacraments. The means of grace? Prayer, Scripture, church attendance? No; he has no time for them. Money for missions, home and foreign? He needs his money for himself, he has none to spare for religion. He will give religion no thought, no attention, no co-operation. Christ shed His blood for the sin of the world? Well, what of it?

The man without a wedding garment despises the goodness of God, reckoning it of small account and worthy of little respect. It is not a great thing to him that, among all others, he also is invited of God. So "many are called," or invited. You surely now are invited; you may or may not be welcomed when the King comes. But you can still change your attitude before the King comes. After that it is too late. You will be speechless. After truculent conduct you must realize there will be nothing you can say.

What about this man without a wedding garment? Let us defend him and sympathize with him! A man has the right to be angry and truculent over the democratic goodness of the King. It is not an ignoble quality of human nature to value things according to their rarity and the possibility of exclusive ownership. It is no honor to have the

great Monarch of all the world invite us, and prepare for us, if He is also going to extend the invitation to the highways and byways. Let others who are easily pleased put on wedding garments if they feel themselves honored.

Look over the guests bidden to the King's feast! You see tears of joy running down the faces of publicans and sinners. They are in anticipation already partaking of the King's bounty. Hear them singing at a table in the far corner: "Even me, even me! Jesus saved us; even me!" Note how one company of men and women, near the door of the throne-room, are nervously awaiting the coming of the King. They are making themselves somewhat ridiculous by prophesying His coming when He does not come: but it shows how anxious they are to honor and see Him. They feel it is wonderful that the King's goodness has included them in its invitation. The banquet hall is echoing with the Hallelujahs of the Redeemed.

But who is that man with a sneer on his face? You heard him say, "There's nothing worth-while in an invitation that is extended to everybody!" He is not thankful. He is not happy. He does not feel himself blessed. You can hear him ask: "Put on a wedding garment? This banquet invitation an honor to me? Go to any trouble about it? Make a fuss about it? Make myself fit for it? I should say not! It isn't worth honoring!"

That is the man without the wedding garment.

XIII

A SKYLINE OF BARNS

"And he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater."—LUKE 12: 17-18.

IF one may know a man's thoughts, one knows that man.

Actions speak louder than words: but a man's thoughts are even a more sure index of the man than are his actions.

Jesus' story of the barn builder, commonly known as "The Rich Fool," reveals a man by his thoughts. The character delineation which Jesus offered is lost if we confuse this story with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This story is concerning a rich fool and was addressed to a fool who probably was rich. A certain man had interrupted Jesus to request: "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." No doubt Jesus meant His parable to apply to this man.

Yet it was also addressed to "an innumerable multitude of people." This audience was not composed exclusively of rich men. Jesus meant His words to reach all whose horizons were bounded by

money, or barns, or possessions, or food, or clothes, or amusements, or the details of life to the exclusion of God.

With a master stroke of characterization, Jesus showed what monopolized the fool's thoughts and He quoted His soliloquy: " he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

A man with an horizon of barns is a realist with vision limited to material goods. Omitting from present concern any question of moral delinquency, which may or may not be assumed of such a materialist, there is revealed the futility of such a man's existence, and the emptiness of a soul without ideals.

Jesus portrayed a man whose skyline was limited by his barns. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, but for this successful farmer the sun only rose over his barns in the east and set in the west over the new annex to his barns. His east was barns and his west was barns: his horizon was bounded by barns. He knew barns and thought barns and talked barns by day and dreamed barns by night. He was probably a pest to his family, who likely heard nothing else at breakfast, dinner or supper than " barns " and " more barns." Only matters that related to barns were interesting to

the man with the soul of a barn builder: for all matters which did not relate to barns were to him unimportant.

" But God said unto him, Thou fool." The man was not a fool because he was rich, and he was not rich because he was a fool: but he was a fool because he could not see anything else than the barns, which constituted his wealth. Jesus named the man what he was. He did not tag the label to the man, He read what was already on the label.

In this story Jesus utters no condemnation of the rich fool. He did not represent God as saying, " This night thy soul shall be required of thee—and thou wilt go into Gehenna." This man was not threatened with hell after death. That was not the point of the story. As stated in another parable, Jesus believed a selfish Dives would find himself in hell after his death. But the rich fool of this story is not threatened with any dire calamity in the world to come. Not a word is said about a future life or its circumstances. It is well to keep in mind the one thought Jesus wished to impress on the interrupter. It had to do with futility: " This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? "

Condemnation does little good to a fool. He is not amenable to correction. Especially if he be very rich, he is quite certain he knows everything: though unteachableness is a characteristic of the fool, whether rich or poor. The rich fool has a

thick skin. He does not care what is said about him. He feels he can afford to be complaisant toward criticism. He believes the tirades against him are always born of the envy of others and their desire to obtain his wealth. He has developed a deep-seated distrust of motives. His experiences have led him to discount pleas of altruism. So often the conclusions of men's pretended concern for his welfare have terminated in that pocket-book of his which they professed to despise. His need of a defensive attitude has created a stone-wall about him. Shafts fall crumpled to the ground. Denunciations are shed from his heart like water from a roof. He can be neither cajoled nor frightened. He isn't fearsome of hell. He will serenely take his chances. So far things have gone very well with him: he will await the future without dread.

Jesus did not threaten this man of the barns. He did not denounce him: nor warn him. He permitted him to reveal himself as a fool.

It is gratuitous to assume that this rich fool had acquired his wealth by any wrong-doing or that he was conspicuously uncharitable or irreligious. This is not the story of the man who closed his heart to beggars. This man was not necessarily a miser. Rich men are often rich because of their very liberality. "There is that which scattereth abroad and yet increaseth." Some men sow sparingly and reap sparingly, some sow bountifully and

reap bountifully. This man had reaped bountifully: which, at any rate, does not prove that he sowed sparingly. His wealth came from the soil, than which there is no more honest wealth. He may have paid his laborers well: men have grown rich by doing that. He may have given standing orders about beggars: no one ever to be turned away.

This is not the story of an irreligious man as "religion" is usually defined. Why assume that he was not a praying man? It is more reasonable to suppose he gave thanks to God for his prosperity. After seeing the Pharisee in the temple and hearing his prayer, "I thank thee, O God,"—it takes no stretch of imagination to suppose this rich fool a fellow-worshipper with the Pharisee. He also may have assumed that God was very fond of him, whereof his prosperity was proof. But if this man was charitable to his fellowmen in need, he was so without letting his mind drift from his barns, and if he prayed he probably prayed about his barns as the Pharisee did about his righteousness. Whereby, in the case of this rich fool, we are led not specifically to a conclusion about any wickedness, but to the fact that he was a fool with an horizon only of barns.

The man with eyes only for his barns is a realist. He has few illusions, and he is not prone to any idealisms. To him a poor man is a poor man, a spade is a spade, and a barn is a barn. It were

foolishly fanciful to call these things by any other names. The conception of a poor man as a heavenly visitant, or of a barn as being a possession which might be glorified for noble purposes, is nonsensical. He is a crass materialist who can only see what his eyes show him. His counterpart is not difficult to find.

In the days of the American Revolution some men saw a Divine cause. To them it was clear that the day had come for God's great experiment in Democracy: they beheld the finger of God in the providential coming to America of the Pilgrims and Puritans and Scotch. They were idealists. They saw in George Washington what Abraham Lincoln later said of him: "To add brightness to the sun or glory to the name of Washington is alike impossible. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked, deathless splendor leave it shining on."

But there were realists also. They saw in the Continental Army only the meagre handful of ill-trained, ill-equipped, unkempt soldiers. Benedict Arnold saw only a George Washington of human failings, and despised him. A Philadelphia newspaper editorial celebrated the termination of Washington's presidency with the words: "The man who is the source of all our country's misery is this day reduced to the rank of his fellow-citizens, and has no longer the power to multiply the woes of these United States. Every heart which feels for

the liberty and the happiness of the people must now beat with rapture at the thought that this day the name of Washington ceases to give currency to injustice and to legalize corruption. This day should be a jubilee in the United States."

During the period of the American Revolution the man with an horizon of barns would only be concerned with the relation of the political situation to his business. He would be blind to anything beyond that. He would be as coldly matter-of-fact and utilitarian as was Judas Iscariot when he commented disparagingly on the devotion of Mary of Bethany in pouring a pound of ointment on Jesus. Judas computed mathematically what that which had been " wasted " might have accomplished. Judas was a realist.

The realist is practical. Jesus meant His story of the rich fool to apply, in the first instance, to the man who had asked Him to cause his brother to divide an inheritance. No doubt this man had listened with growing impatience to Jesus' words about the care of the Heavenly Father for His children and even for the birds. When Jesus had gotten so far as to tell about the function of the Holy Ghost in caring for the defence of His disciples when they should be in trouble with magistrates, this practical man could no longer contain himself in peace. There was something far more practical he had to suggest to Jesus. He wished Jesus to act as bill-collector for him. His request revealed his

horizon. He had a chance to know Jesus and to learn about God, and all he thought about was how to get a financial matter adjusted.

There is no reason to question the honesty of the man who thought Jesus should interest Himself in the inheritance dispute. In fact it may be presumed from his conduct in presenting the issue publicly, as he did, that this man was very sure of the righteousness of his cause. Jesus did not dispute that point. But He told a story. The story of the man with a skyline of barns was meant to fit the case of anyone who could intrude his financial problems into the midst of meditations on the relation of God to the world. Inheritances or barns, they meant the same thing. The man's request revealed his soul as at night a shaft of lightning reveals the landscape. The sordid poverty of the practical temperament stood out in all its ugliness by its reaction to the winsome and lofty idealism of Jesus. With the world's Redeemer near him, the thoughts of the fool are only on barns. He had the instincts of a squirrel: concerned exclusively with the laying up of a treasure of nuts for the winter. " But God said unto him, Thou fool."

What do you think Jesus wished to accomplish in the hearts of His hearers by telling them this story? He was distressed over the emptiness and poverty of souls with horizons of barns. And if, instead of big barns, the skyline is bounded by little chicken coops, for those who cannot aspire to

barns, the tragedy of such souls is equally indicated. For this reason Jesus included the large audience, with the rich fool, in His address.

Jesus' story about futilities is for men and women harassed with the cares of this world or the striving for wealth, or the pursuit of pleasure, who, engrossed in these things, are losing their power of vision like fish which become blind because they live in underground waters. Such persons, even in church, find it quite impossible to get beyond the horizon of barns.

Jesus comes to men with skylines of barns, to say: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Men limited by the vision of barns cannot see the church as the "bride of Christ," nor the needy of the world, as incarnated Christs: "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." To the man with the skyline of barns Christianity counsels:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul
As the swift seasons roll."

Crass, stark realism has emptied the souls of barn builders. Idealism is dead. With them, seeing is believing, not believing, seeing. They would not refuse to share a portion of their wealth with God. Not at all. But their difficulty is to see God, and understand how they can transmit a contribu-

tion to Him. That is the difficulty of realists: how to see God.

The Church? This realist would do something for the Church if the Church were worthy and he were not always disappointed when he came in contact with it. He yet has to find the minister who is not unsatisfactory, or else officers or other members who make the Church repellant and inefficient. He has tried several, and with the same result. He will not endorse an institution which is not run right. He has heard the Church called " the bride of Christ," but no Church he has yet found has seemed to him anything else than crude and unworthy. It does not occur to him that the fault may be in himself. So he goes back to barn-building.

He has tried charity work and been disillusioned. He found the objects of his charitable impulses unthankful and unworthy. Their plight was always traceable to their own faults. He has seen " the dissolute, damned and despairful, crippled and palsied and slain," as they were: and inasmuch as he would do anything for them, he would be doing it for people who did not deserve it. So he feels justified in finding the outlet for his surplus money in greater barns.

Foreign missions seemed for a moment to hold a glamour for him, and take him away from barns. But one day some world travellers came home announcing their astounding discovery that missionaries eat wholesome food, live comfortably, educate

their children, and even in some countries have servants. And for all this they draw money from the Foreign Missionary treasury! So he declares himself disillusioned and proclaims he has paid his last cent for any support of lazy missionaries. He will now build more barns.

The realist reasons within himself that if he could find God anywhere he would share his wealth with Him. Or he would devote considerable of his time and attention to God's affairs. But at what address will he find God, so he may remit to Him? Thus far, God has not been found. As for the near-by church, it is as crude and unworthy as the Continental Army in the days of Washington.

The barn builder never will find God until he discounts the value of his barns. The barns shut out the skyline of God. The man does not see mansions in his dreams for which he can exchange his barns. He will need to realize that his barns are futile anyway. He cannot hold them forever. "Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Beyond the barns are palaces, if he will but enlarge his horizon. The sun rises and sets again, not over barns, but in the chambers of heaven and in the Father's house. The barn builders might live in palaces instead of among barns. They might be the sons and daughters of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords: they might be the heirs of the ages, and the inheritors of eternity.

Jesus came to the barn builders to cast over them

the spell of immortality: to tell the meaning of Calvary and its assurance. Men should be as children standing before the doors on Christmas morning. Did they never, as children, dance before such a door in eagerness of anticipation? Tomorrow God throws open that door. The glories will be of dazzling radiance: the ecstatic joys overwhelming: for the Father is rich beyond the possibilities of men's imagining. And God's providence cares for all, even the birds of the air.

Will you interrupt to ask Jesus to collect a bill for you? Is there nothing else to see, nothing else to dream about, than barns and more barns?

" But God said unto him, Thou fool."

XIV

CHRIST AND PROGRESS

"Then goeth he [the unclean spirit], and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."—LUKE 11:26.

ADVANCE on a road leading away from one's destination is not progress, but retrogression. There is the greater distance to retrace. If at the end of a day of effort one is farther from his goal than he was at the beginning, the day's effort was futile. Yet the meditation on such a result may mark the beginning of an advance which will be real progress.

Astonishment must have followed upon Jesus' story of a man who disastrously ended a temporary spiritual improvement by having eight devils dwelling in him instead of the one of which he was originally possessed. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man" the condition of such a man self-evidently seems bettered. But Jesus proceeded to say that such progress might only be the prelude to a more complete catastrophe: "Then goeth he (the unclean spirit), and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in

and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Jesus' illustration challenges careful thought. What did He mean to accomplish by this brief sketch of soul-history, which may be named "The Return of the Demon"? Evidently He had in mind the futility of misdirected efforts. We probably will agree that His crushing pessimism applies to some theories of progress in our age, from which perhaps our own hearts have not been altogether immune. We shall gain much if we come to a renewed conviction that without Jesus we cannot be saved.

That which seems to be progress may end in overwhelming disaster. Men may deceive themselves into supposing that an apparent spiritual advance is gain, when, as a matter of fact, such gain is but temporary at best, and by its very existence creates a condition which is sure to result in a worse spiritual state than there was before the so-called improvement commenced. Reaching an understanding of what is impossible and futile in the treatment of sin and evil, though this bring us to a pessimistic conclusion, may quickly turn us to another method of treatment which has glorious promise.

Jesus was deeply concerned over the demons He found in the hearts of men and women. To Him, sin was a grim reality. He loved the people He met in the cities and villages of Palestine. He

yearned to convey to them the knowledge of God and the purpose of their existence. Always uppermost in Jesus' mind was the value of the human soul, each soul more precious than the whole world. But humanity was tragically unreceptive to His advances. Doors were shut: ears were stopped: eyes were closed. Sin had done that. The result of demon possessions was sickness of body, mind and soul. Men were epileptic, deaf, dumb, blind, leprous, because their bodies were dwelling-places of demons. Because their minds were tenanted by demons, they were bigoted, conceited, prejudiced, illogical, thoughtless. Because their souls were dominated by demons, they were self-righteous, proud, hateful, resentful.

Jesus believed in the reality of demon possessions. He placed His stamp of acceptance on the theory that human ills were due to demoniac activities. To Him there was no superstition in such a view of the ailments of men. If the explanation that sin and misery are the result of a devil within men be a superstition which should now be outgrown, then Jesus endorsed a superstition and Jesus is outgrown. For of the sincerity of Jesus' belief in demon possessions there can be no question; the Gospels leave us no other alternative. If Jesus was wrong in so serious a predicate of His activities, He is no dependable guide or teacher in any other matter of spiritual diagnosis.

Jesus entered human affairs as a fighter, an an-

tagonist, a champion of God in the arena of human souls, battling for conquest over an enemy against whom He had declared uncompromising war. He came to bruise the head of the serpent. He was meek and lowly, kind and considerate, winsome and inviting in His attitude toward sinners; but He was commanding, severe, uncompromising in His character as sworn enemy to the devil and his legions. With Him it was not play-acting; He was not battling a straw-man, He was not reciting formulas in which He merely pretended with a deceptive acquiescence to agree with a current superstition. For Him it was a life and death conflict on the issue of which hung the destiny of the souls of men. And the uncompromising earnestness of Jesus as a fighter against demons sometimes necessitated severity toward men who would interfere with His warfare. He did not treat the subject of demon possession as a figment of the imagination, lightly to be brushed aside.

Jesus' concern over sin was shown in that bitter controversy with the scribes and Pharisees which gave the occasion for Jesus' story of the eight devils where there had been but one. The controversy was on the subject of the efficacy of the Pharisees' work.

Jesus believed in the absolute necessity for His own coming. He did not present Himself as a teacher among teachers or as one bringing merely additional enlightenment to the world. He de-

clared Himself altogether essential for the world's salvation. Jesus portrayed the tragic consequences to the soul which attempted its salvation without Him, or submitted itself to the makeshift treatment of other human beings. Had Jesus' attitude been that His way was merely another good way of salvation, or even that His way was simply the best among many ways leading to the same destination, there would have been little conflict. The matter could have been kept in the academic atmosphere of argumentation. But the position of our Lord was that any other way than His way was worse for humanity than no way at all. That was what created a blood-feud. The Pharisees resented this declaration on the futility of man-made reform, especially as Jesus claimed for His illustration an immediate practical application. The saying had teeth: it claimed to fit the case of His hearers and to declare their real spiritual condition. Matthew reported Jesus' conclusion as it was fastened into His hearers' hearts: " even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation " (Matthew 12: 45). There was no escape from the meaning of Jesus' words: " you may seem to be improving, but you are sure to be in a worse condition than before your so-called improvement began."

Jesus would not permit the matter of demon possessions to be considered as though human ingenuity and wisdom could treat it successfully. " The Kingdom of God," Jesus declared, could only come,

" if I with the finger of God cast out devils." That was the declaration of the necessity for Him. A stronger man than a strong man was needed. " When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." These were Jesus' words preceding His story of " The Return of the Demon." His deep concern over sin was born out of His knowledge that its eradication was impossible except by the power of the Son of God. He did not come to be a teacher of beautiful sentiments. God could have used other means for that. But the Divine Son Himself was needed for the terrific fight with " a strong man armed " in the souls of men. No palliatives could remedy the case, no human effort, no process of education, no fatuous ignoring of the reality of sin; He Himself was absolutely needed, and only because that was so did God give " his only begotten son."

Jesus had such deep concern over sin, and over the necessity for His own coming to a warfare against demons, because He knew that any other way of salvation was worse than futile and ineffective. The crushing pessimism of Jesus was directed against any other hope of success. Let men try to cast out demons, and the demons would but return. Not only would a demon return to the heart apparently renovated, but would return with seven more

demons: there would then be eight devils instead of one, a perfect bedevilment. The self-authorized spiritual physicians were engaged in malpractice. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." The relapse sure to follow would be more serious than was the original ailment.

You see Jesus in the arena dealing in tremendous earnestness with demon-possessed souls: "they brought unto him—those which were possessed with devils" (Matthew 4: 24). "There met him (Jesus) two possessed with devils—and they cried out, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Are thou come hither to torment us before the time?—And he said unto them, Go" (Matthew 8: 28). We cannot explain the Gospel accounts of demon possessions as mere superstitions, without also dismissing Jesus as an outgrown teacher. The Gospel states that in Capernaum "there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone: —I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him" (Mark 1: 23). Gentle as Jesus was toward suffering, sin-stained humanity, yet He was also an uncompromising fighter, who came "that he might destroy the works of the devil." He knew Himself to be that antagonist of the serpent who had been promised since the days of Adam in Eden. And He would brook no interference from demons, or from misguided

spiritual leaders who could not successfully win the fight.

With consciousness of the need of Himself, Jesus declared "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "I am the door." "He that entereth not by the door unto the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." And His disciples echoed their Master's assertion in the declaration: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Efforts expended in the wrong direction would not help but rather make worse the spiritual conditions of men. Apparent progress would only result in relapse. And perseverance in the wrong direction would only aggravate and increase the harm and make the final state the more hopeless. Like persistent practice on a musical instrument, begun and continued with a bad fault, it were better there were no effort at all, rather than the industry and application which only confirm the fault. There is the greater distance to retrace. And Jesus could not permit men to overlook the tragic consequences to their souls from spiritual malpractice: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23: 15).

We are not addressing ourselves to scribes and Pharisees. But we are directing our thoughts of Jesus' teaching, in this age which has a fatuous confidence in automatic progress and legislative palliatives, to men and women tainted with a false hope. Is there salvation without repentance and a new heart? At any rate let us be clear that Jesus' conclusions concerning the inevitable end of spiritual experimentation without His Divine aid was crushingly pessimistic.

It does not interest us to attach to any persons or philosophies the name of "pharisaism." But let us beware of salvation without Christ. Such would "wish away" sin: obliterate it by not thinking of it: deny it by ignoring it. Such would believe in the sufficiency of human endowments to conquer the seed of the serpent. Demon possession would be relegated to the realm of superstition. All we need is "to think right." So Jesus, as a combatant, is not essential. He may remain a choice friend with good advice, but not the stronger than the strong man, the only one to wield the finger of God, the only way to the Father.

When Jesus declared the result of Pharisaism He knew from experience, as well as intuitively, that the last state was worse than the first. He knew the relapse of the soul: its hardened condition: the complete bedevilment: eight devils instead of one. Jesus' illustration does not necessarily imply that a man would commit eight times as

much outward sin in his last state. Perhaps the difference would be slight; perhaps there would be an apparent outward improvement. But Jesus knew that the soul which had suffered a relapse would be hardened, unteachable, unreceptive.

Will we not fall down on our knees to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for the clear and positive statements He made to save us from the tragic folly of trusting in ourselves, or in any man-made remedy for sin?

You know that unless Jesus casts him out, the demon always comes back, and with the continuing return of the demon there is the danger of sinking into a state of hopeless despair, or of hardened self-righteousness. Do not trust to your own powers of reform: do not let the deceit that there is salvation in any other name influence you.

Jesus' illustration of the futility of self-reform is like a fence of iron bars that blocks a road. It stands rigid and unyielding. It decisively discourages the attempts to break through it. Jesus' positiveness cannot be evaded: we have seen its uncompromising nature.

But why has the fence been erected? Would one resent the closing of a road which ends at the brink of an abyss? Are you angry if the obstruction of this road forces you to see the Way of Safety?

XV

AMBITIOUS DISCIPLES

" Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."
—MARK 10: 37.

AMBITION is determination to achieve an objective, and is born of earnest purpose. Ambition, in order to overcome difficulties, calls upon such resources of the soul as fortitude, consistency of endeavor and endurance.

A fascinating cross-section of human nature is presented in the request of James and John for seats on the right hand, and on the left hand of Jesus, in His glory. In Matthew's account of this incident the petition of the sons of Zebedee was also endorsed by their mother in the words: " Grant that these, my two sons, may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy Kingdom."

A cynic might derive some amusement over the immodest request of these two disciples, and the resultant play of emotions. Of the fellow-disciples of James and John we are told: " when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against

the two brethren." But any temptation to mirth vanishes as the vibrations of tense heart-strings come to us, for there can be no question of the deep feelings involved in the situation.

To dismiss this incident as merely an exhibition of childish selfishness is a very shallow reading of the gospel. The request of James and John is of tremendous importance and significance to us: sympathetic understanding of it will not merely yield an intellectual satisfaction, but will drive winged arrows into our hearts. When we realize the groundwork for this extraordinary petition, we shall not be able to avoid some reflections which should translate themselves into immediate conduct.

Self-welfare created by unselfish service is the motive force of Christianity. All service rendered the cause of Christianity is recompensed. Christianity not only recognizes the incentives of reward, but emphasizes them. Christianity does not look upon men and women as though they were automatons acting without impulses. A disposition among men and women loftily to disdain the offers of rewards and superciliously to put them aside with an assumption of their unimportance or unworthiness as motives of conduct, is an attitude of mind not born of humility and nobleness of spirit, but of unbelief seeking to excuse unfaithfulness.

The twelve men who constituted Jesus' apostolate are history's incomparable group. In them we

are introduced to the most distinguished company of men on earth. As we look upon paintings of "Napoleon and His Generals," or "Lincoln and His Cabinet," we feel there were much lacking in our education if we did not know the men of these notable groups. Far more serious were our ignorance if we did not know "Jesus and His Generals," or His "Cabinet," for these twelve men constituted the most remarkable body of human beings this world has ever known.

Jesus' apostles were not men without talents: John, Matthew, James and Peter wrote immortal literature. They all were great men, even Judas Iscariot. Their chief greatness lay in their spiritual capacities, faithfulness, energy, persuasive power, and steadfastness even to death. They were the choice of Jesus for foundation pillars of the Church. They were not merely the first ones who believed on Him, but were Jesus' picked men. Jesus told them, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15: 16). We may not be able adequately to appraise them as Jesus did, but we know enough about them and their work to realize that even with their faults they were worthy as Christ's choice for apostles.

How serious to the cause of Christianity was the choice of its first office-holders it is not difficult to realize, nor the momentous consequences which were involved. Humanly speaking, one inexplicable Judas seems about all the handicap early

Christianity could overcome. Tragic would have been the results had there later been another to become a thief, or an adulterer, or a recanter of the faith under pressure, or a heretic. Surely Jesus realized the seriousness of the choice of the personnel of His staff, and when He invited a man into the company of the apostolate it was a great compliment to such a man.

But what of their quarrelsomeness? The group characteristics of these twelve are always interesting: we glory in their spirituality, loyalty, energy. But other characteristics, not so lovely, and yet very prominent, are presented with no attempt to gloss them over. The most conspicuous of such was the spirit of strife among them, of rivalry for power and position. And this was not confined to a single occasion, but repeatedly came to the surface. "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Matthew 18: 1). "And he (Jesus) came to Capernaum and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9: 34). Visualize, if you please, that scene of argument as each one of this company asserts that he is the greatest! "Then there arose a reasoning among them which of them should be greatest" (Luke 9: 46). "And there was also a strife among them,

which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22: 24). This latter strife took place in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, on the night of the betrayal, amid all the solemnity of those last hours, and just after Jesus had given these disciples the Holy Communion. So the story of James and John and Salome asking for seats in glory next to the throne on Jesus' right hand and on His left, is not an isolated instance of the spirit of the apostolate, but a characteristic one.

There is great profit from a patient moment of examination into the apostles' spirit of strife, its causes and circumstances. It is shallow gospel reading to neglect it. It is mistaken charity to gloss it over. The writers of the gospel were not simply indiscreet in perpetuating the knowledge of these quarrels. In minimizing these statements, because they seem derogatory to Jesus' Cabinet, we may unwittingly do the reputation of the apostles more harm than good. It might increase our respect for them far more than is done by the dismissal of the subject with the implied admission that the apostles were simply subject to petty strife, without any adequate reason for it.

Jesus treated the striving of His apostles for preferment with leniency. True, He corrected the direction and defined the objectives of their determination, and also clearly set forth the method of its attainment. But He by no means crushed His disciples' ambitions for greatness. He indicated

that their greatness would need to be attained by unselfish service and not by domineering assumptions, that its basis would need to be childlike trustfulness and simplicity. But He did not break their spirit. It was made plain to James and John and their mother Salome, that the rewards of the Kingdom of God would be apportioned according to desert and not by favoritism. A damning condemnation, a sneer, an unwise rebuke would have broken the hearts of those two sterling disciples, and would have fanned the embers of jealousy in the other ten. Jesus declared there was an understanding between God and Himself whereby the distribution of the honors in the future Kingdom were to be apportioned on a merit basis, of which God alone would be the judge. Had Jesus desired to eradicate the root from which grew their strife, a different and less lenient course would have been followed by Him.

Jesus Himself was responsible for His ambitious disciples. Jesus made men ambitious. He made them so by His constant references in conversations, sermons and addresses concerning the Kingdom of Heaven to rewards, powers, treasures, recompenses. He promised the possibility of acquiring everlasting riches and becoming truly great. He insisted on holding before the imaginations of His disciples the achievements of compensations, remembrances, glories. Even to a mere cup of cold water nothing would be forgotten, even down to

that done for "the least of these my brethren" every act would be recompensed. "Inasmuch as" anything was done for anyone in the name of their Lord there would be rewards. There would be cities to be ruled over, there would be new talents to be given those who used what they had, there would be positions in glory and thrones: no man should do anything without receiving a hundredfold of lands and houses or their equivalent, and in the world to come eternal life.

Jesus did not deal with His disciples as if they would strive without incentives, He dealt frankly with them in recognizing motives as necessary facts in the souls of men. So He had His disciples walking as in dreams. He cast His spell over them by arousing their imaginations. They felt themselves to be premiers in a great Kingdom, a greater Kingdom than the world had ever before known. They felt themselves to be important men near the throne. This is the explanation of their ambition and enthusiasm. They believed Jesus' promises of rewards. They accepted His words at par. They believed that Jesus' promises were one hundred per cent. truth.

The results of Jesus' influence over His followers may be looked upon either as ludicrous or as sublime according to how one believes Jesus. No doubt Jesus used a dangerous weapon. Ambition is a two-edged sword. Ambition made the dullard disciple a marvelous zealot. Perhaps it drove

Judas Iscariot to treachery. The postponement of the promised reward may have made him peeved and ugly. But Jesus nevertheless used personal reward as the motive for His disciples' conduct. He promised that God would remember everything: alms, prayers, service. Men believed what He told them, and one either laughs or gasps in watching the transformations which took place. Zacchæus gives away his ill-gotten gains. Matthew leaves his lucrative customs office. Jesus fired ordinary, common men and women, who had no claim whatever to any greatness, with such conceptions of the importance to which they might attain that they actually became great as they yielded to that spell. Even moral delinquents became saints because Jesus expected it of them.

By His own example of restless striving to accomplish a task and reach a goal, Jesus made His disciples ambitious. Men, like Andrew and John, met Him and then rushed from His presence to convert their brothers. Jesus said: " I am come to send fire on the earth." It has been said: " People came from John's baptism dripping with water, from Jesus' baptism dripping with fire." Jesus it was of whom it was said: " He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Ofttimes in the restless energy of doing His work, Jesus had no time to eat. He fell exhausted into the little boat on Galilee's shore. His enemies said of Him: " he is beside himself." He applied to Himself the

words of the prophet: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Under the stimulus of Jesus' own example of activity, and His promises of rewards and glories, it was impossible for the disciples to fall asleep at their task. They were not anæmic posers, grouping themselves for future painters, and listless as their portraits are on the stained glass church windows. They were whirlwinds of activity, turning the world upside down, often indeed quarreling, but not quarreling because they did not care about the progress of the Kingdom, but because they did care and wished a large share in it. Jesus made them ambitious. What else could have been expected as the result of their believing implicitly His promises: "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: That ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22: 29).

What has caused the vast difference between the enthusiasm of these first disciples and the lethargy of the average church today? Is the outstanding reason this, that these first disciples believed Jesus' promises of rewards without equivocation, and that today the average Christian does not believe, and is not interested in Jesus' rewards? Men may discount Jesus' promises of compensations, treasures in heaven, rulerships and glories, as largely "sales talk." They may consider Jesus' words as they do

some advertisements of moving picture shows, discounting the high praise by from forty to forty-five per cent., and holding under advisement whether the promised show is any better than the average.

For those who have already wasted most of their lives, and know quite well that they shall probably waste the remainder of it, there is a strong temptation to believe that there is no truth in the promises of rewards and treasures for Christian service. Such come readily to a lofty disdain of the offers of recompenses, superciliously putting them aside with an assumption of their unworthiness as motives of conduct. Let us be sure that such mental attitude is not of humility, but of unbelief seeking to excuse unfruitfulness.

Or would we tell Jesus that He used unworthy incentives with His disciples? Shall we ask Him to keep His rewards? The money we give to God's cause is spent, gone, lost, like any other money for groceries or amusements. We are willing to give to religious causes what we believe is a decent sum of money, considering our means and our rights to ourselves. But we are not building castles-in-the-air on any promises that we shall be laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. We are willing to help the cause of religion by some service, but as to the proffered rewards, we are not interested.

What would you think of a child whose parent promises a wonderful gift as reward for faithful school work, to be given such child on its gradu-

ation day, yet the child responds that it prefers not to think of nor be influenced by any such promise? What would you think of one of these apostles of Jesus, if he replied to Jesus' promises of rewards and recompenses that he was not interested in them, and preferred they should be given to others? As to such an one's absolute belief in the words of Jesus, spiritual capacity and susceptibility to the lure of heaven, would you prefer him over a James or John, even though these latter in their childlike fervor and simplicity of belief, needed some correction of their exuberant ambition?

If we think it is becoming in us, we may be critical of the request of James and John, these sons of Zebedee. Or we may dismiss the incident with a passing and shallow comment on the strange disposition to quarrelsomeness among Jesus' disciples. Or we may enter into the experiences of their lives, and understand their inspirations and ambitions. We might realize how their faith carried them through peril, toil and pain and justified the choice of them as among the greatest body of men on earth. We might rejoice in their sincerity of belief in the promises of Jesus Christ, and glory in their honest faith. If we believed as they did, would not Christianity experience a renaissance?

Would God the Church today had more sons of Zebedee.

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